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SONGS AND VERSES
AND
THE TRUE CROSS



"The bonny breast-knots."

Songs and Verses
and
The True Cross

By
G. J. Whyte-Melville

Author of "Sarchedon," "Cerise," "Black but Comely," etc.

Illustrated by S. E. Waller

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CONTENTS

Songs and Verses

	PAGE
Hero and Leander	9
Help and Hold	13
Alice of Ormskirk	18
Griselda	21
It is not Good to be Alone	23
The Bonny Breast-knots	25
R. I. P.	26
Lost	28
Void	35
Lady Margaret	37
True Metal	39
The Queen of the Roses	41
Espérance	42
"There Leave thy Gift upon the Altar"	44
A Dirge	46
Nightfall	48
Ephemeral	49

	PAGE
Commune Malum	51
Valeria's Death in the Court of the Temple	53
The White Witch	55
Forget Me Not	57
On a Sketch, by Augustus Lumley, Esq., of a Cavalier's Widow Looking at her Husband's Portrait	59
"Imbuta"	60
"Riding through the Broom"	62
The Proud Ladye	64
"John Anderson"	66
"Soul Music"	68
Mary Hamilton	71
Love's Pedigree	73
Cathcart's Hill	74
"Ave Cæsar! Morituri te Salutant!"	77
Ysonde with the White Hand	80
Hunting Songs :—	
The Lord of the Valley	83
The Galloping Squire	86
"A Rum One to Follow, a Bad One to Beat"	89
"A Day's Ride a Life's Romance"	92
"The Clipper that Stands in the Stall at the Top"	95
The Ward	98
The Bullfinch	101
"The Good Grey Mare"	102
The King of the Kennel	106

CONTENTS

7

	PAGE
A Cavalier's Song	109
"The Monks that Live Under the Hill"	111
An Angel in the Way	114
How He Won the Swimmer's Gold Medal and the Victoria Cross	117
"Boots and Saddles"	121
The Fairies' Spring	123
"Pot-pourri"	125
Chastelâr	127
Chastelâr	128
Chastelâr	129
The Maiden's Vow	131
Farewell	133
The Fairest Flower	134
Retrorsum	136
"Nunc est Bibendum"	141
Like to Like	144
A Lullaby	146
An Incantation	147
Over the Water	149
"Yes—I Like You"	151
So Far Away	153
A Dream	155
"The Place Where the Old Horse Died"	157
Tally-ho!	160
"Brow, Bay and Tray"	163

	PAGE
Ware Wire! ,	168
The King of the West ,	171
A Lay of the Ranston Bloodhounds ,	174
Gipsy John ,	178
If I Were a Queen ,	181
A Word for Champagne ,	183
" Goodbye!" ,	185

The True Cross

Introduction—A Vision of the Night ,	189
BOOK I.—The Seed	199
„ II.—The Ark	219
„ III.—The Tree ,	266
„ IV.—The Beam ,	284
„ V.—The Pool ,	323
„ VI.—The Centurion	336

P O E M S



"Thistles and nettles, and darnel rank,
Dock and henbane, and hemlock dank."—*Shelley*.

"Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris."—*Horace*.



HERO AND LEANDER

BARE was the shapely form of Hero's love,
Such form as woke to life the sculptor's art ;
Black was the wave and wild the heaven above,
And chill the fears that curdled round her heart

As Hero restless turned, and rose to trim
The friendly radiance of that flickering light,
And still she sighed and trembled still for him,
Far on the deep beneath the brooding night.

" Yet not so far for *him*, the strong, the brave,
Whose glad embrace nor time nor tide can bar,
Who boasts his mastery o'er the leaping wave,
Stout loving heart ! 'Tis surely not so far ! "

With that she summoned courage, and the flame
She fed afresh, then turned her to the door,
And starting smiled—and blushed for very shame,
A blush that left her paler than before.

For no one entered—and the marble stair
Showed wide and cheerless in her lonely tower,
And something whispered, “ Can another fair
Have lured my false Leander to her bower? ”

Ungenerous thought ! “ Why tarrieth he so long ? ”
Ungenerous thought ! half stifled ere it grew ;
The gathering waves, the current deep and strong,
The swimmer’s gasping need, too well she knew.

And he was battling on the while as still
Battles the loving heart, though storms arise,
The loving heart, that strives through good and ill,
And though it fail at last, unconquered dies.

When first he plunged to meet the opposing wave,
How comely was that shape, so fresh and bright !
With vigorous strokes, its sidelong way that clave,
Exulting, godlike, in its youthful might.

The moon shone fitful down in shimmering line ;
Her own Endymion was not half so fair
As he who laughed aloud to lip the brine,
And shake the sea-drops from his glistening hair.

Sweet was the siren's voice, yet all in vain,
To lure him back she smote her sounding shell ;
And wreathed her snowy arms—unheard the strain,
Unseen the gesture, and unfelt the spell.

For Hero's glimmering beacon shone to guide,
And Hero's voice seemed murmuring in his ear ;
Though long the watery way, and fierce the tide,
Ere breath and sinew failed, the goal was near.

But still the wind was freshening, and the deep
Swelled up in whiter surges, broad and high ;
And what could strength 'gainst that resistless sweep,
And what was courage good for, but to die ?

Thrice did the choking waters o'er him close,
Athwart the moon, a driving cloud sped on,
Ere it had passed, a score of bubbles rose
To spot the wrinkled wave—and he was gone.

So Hero woke, and watched, and whiter grew,
The beacon fire died out as day drew nigh ;
And on the woman's cheek a paler hue
Showed cold and sad beneath the morning sky.

The dawn flushed up. As sinking to their sleep,
In longer curve the waters heaved and rolled ;
While o'er the sobs of a relenting deep,
The sunrise drew its sheet of molten gold.

Another morn its shining promise gave,
Another day of Light and Life in store ;
And yet a corpse was on the dancing wave,
A woman's heart was breaking on the shore.

She saw and stretched her arms ; one stifled moan,
One blinding plunge, she reached Leander's side ;
Cold was her darling's sleep, yet not alone,
He loved and battled, she but loved and died.

HELP AND HOLD

A LEGEND OF THE HOUSE OF ST. CLAIR

“ Now fie ! now fie ! ” quoth Robert the king—
And the red blood flew to his brow,
And the weight of his hand bade the beakers ring—
“ I am shamed this day, I trow !

“ In stable and hall I have steeds and men,
I have hounds both staunch and free,
But the white faunch deer of the hawthorn glen
Makes light of my woodcraft and me !

“ And I vow to St. Hubert as I sit here,
To St. Andrew, St. Rule, and St. Bride,
Till I’ve sounded ‘ the mort ’ o’er the white faunch
deer,
No more in the woodland to ride ! ”

Then up and spake the bold St. Clair,
Was drinking the red wine free,
“ The lands of thy vassal are scant and bare,
My liege, as they should not be.

“ But had I the space by wood and wold
To breathe them a summer’s day,
I’d ask but my two hounds, Help and Hold,
While I brought the white deer to bay ! ”

“ Ye are stout,” quoth the King—“ ye are stout, my
lord,
As behoves a St. Clair to be,
But there’s many a brag at the evening board
Winna stand in the morn on the lea.

“ The lands of the Strath, both far and near,
Shall be yours if her flight ye can turn,
And bring me to grips with the white faunch deer
Ere she win through the black march burn.

“ But a man may not take if he dare not lose,
And the venture is yet to be said :
Should your good hounds fail, then ye shall not
choose,
My lord, but to forfeit your head ! ”

“ A wager ! a wager ! ” cried bold St. Clair ;
“ See, bring me both hound and horn ;
Go saddle the bonny black Barbary mare,
The fleetest that feeds on corn.

“ A wager ! a wager ! on Help and Hold !
Was never a lord of my line
But would wager his life against lands and gold :
My liege, the broad Strath shall be mine ! ”

* * * * *

They saddled their steeds at mirk o'night,
They mounted when dawn was near,
And they slipped the good hounds with the dim grey
light,
On the track of the white faunch deer.

The white faunch deer like an arrow flew,
The good hounds followed fast;
I trow they drove her from slot to view,
Ere noon was fairly past.

Still first in the chase rode bold St. Clair,
The Bruce spurred hard in his track,
And the foam stood white on the Barbary mare,
And the King's bonny bay grew slack.

"She fails," quoth St. Clair, "and the good hounds
gain,
St. Katherine speed their flight!
Now cote * her! and turn her across the plain,
For the black march burn is in sight!

The black march burn falls steep at the bank,
To the pitch of a horseman's chin,
But Hold's grey muzzle is hot on her flank,
And the white faunch deer leaps in.

* "Cote," a term of chase meaning to be alongside; from the French *côte*—*côtoyer*.

Light down ! light down ! thou St. Clair bold !
Or never go hunting more,
Now have at her, Help ! now hang to her, Hold !
And they turn her back to the shore.

The King's bonny bay a good bow-shot mark
Stopped short of the Barbary mare,
And the hounds stood grim and the deer lay stark
At the feet of bold St. Clair.

“ My liege ! my liege ! will ye take the knife ? ”
The St. Clair bent his knee ;
By St. Katherine's aid, both lands and life
Have my good hounds won for me.

“ And I vow to St. Katherine I'll build a shrine
In ' the Hopes ' * by the western wave,
And I vow to St. Hubert these hounds of mine
Shall be carven in stone on my grave ! ”

The bold St. Clair he sleeps in Spain,†
For with good Lord James he had part,
When they hewed a red path through a host of
slain,
To follow the Bruce's heart.

* The chapel of St. Katherine-in-the-Hopes, built by Sir William St. Clair, early in the fourteenth century.

† This Sir William was slain by the Moors in Spain, while accompanying the heart of Robert Bruce to the Holy Land.



And the hounds stood grim and the deer lay stark."

But Help and Hold, as I've been told,
 May be seen in St. Katherine's chapelle ;
And scion and heir of the house of St. Clair
 Still love a good hound well.

ALICE OF ORMSKIRK

DAYS and months drag wearily by,
Scenes and shadows, they haunt me still,
The starlit stream and the wintry sky,
And the day dying out on the crest of the hill.

And the lights astir in the town below,
There lived Alice, the frank and free ;
Many a flower could Ormskirk show,
Alice alone looked kindly on me.

She could whisper, and smile, and sigh,
Pleading, flattering, so can the rest ;
But oh ! the light in her roving eye,
Would have wiled the babe from its mother's breast.

I freighted my bark with the rich and rare,
Alice of Ormskirk ! all for thee,
Little I reckoned of cost or care,
But I launched her out on a summer sea.

A summer sea, and a smiling sky,
Never a ripple, and never a frown,
Never a token of shipwreck nigh,
What did it matter? The bark went down.

For though I was rugged, and wild, and free,
I had a heart like another man;
And oh! had I known how the end would be,
I would it had broke ere the play began.

I would it had broke ere I sued in vain,
Ere Alice grew cold and cruel to me;
But though I was dizzy and sick with pain,
I turned from her bower as haughty as she.

Alice of Ormskirk! could ye not spare?
Never I bore you a thought of ill;
Alice of Ormskirk, false and fair!
You have darkened my life! Must I love you still?

Oh! better for me that a blind-born child,
Never a line I had learned to trace,
Than thus by a look and a laughed beguiled,
To have read my doom in fair Alice's face.

And better for me to have made my bed
Under the yews where my fathers sleep,
Calm and weary, at rest with the dead,
Than have given my heart to fair Alice to keep

Night by night must I pace the shore,
Longing, lingering to and fro,
Questioning, " May I not see her once more,
Alice of Ormskirk ? "—Answering " No ! "

And still the echoing sea-cave rings
Its one unceasing pitiless strain,
And still the wild wave dashes and sings,
" Never again love—never again ! "

GRISELDA

For though her smile was sad and faint,
And though her voice was low,
She never murmured a complaint,
Nor hinted at her woe ;
Nor harboured in her gentle breast
The lightest thought of ill,
Giving all, forgiving all,
Pure and perfect still.

Confiding when the world was hard,
And kind when it was cold,
What wealth of love was stored and barred
Within that heart of Gold !
Exulting every grief to share,
And every task fulfil ;
Giving all—forgiving all,
Fond and faithful still.

And when to crush that patient brow
The storm-cloud broke at last,

And all her pride was shattered now,
And all her power was past,
She meekly kissed the hand that smote,
And yielded to its will,
Giving all—forgiving all,
True and tender still.

IT IS NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE

IN solitude the sparks are struck that bid the world
admire,

Though heart and brain must scorch the while in
self-consuming fire.

IN solitude the sufferer smiles, defiant of his doom,
And madness sits aloof, and waits, and gibbers in the
gloom.

'Tis dazzling work to weave at will from fancy's
brightest dyes,

And speed the task, ungrudging all, we have, and
hope, and prize.

But it must make the devils laugh, to mark how, day
by day,

The plague-spot widens out and spreads, and eats the
web away.

IN vain the unwilling rebel writhes, so loth defeat to
own,

Turns from the day, and scorns to pray, and couches
down alone.

Oh ! better far to wail aloud, on earth and heaven to
cry,
Than, like the panther in its lair, to gnash his teeth
and die.
Then help me, brother, help me ! For thy heart is
made like mine,
The shaft that drains my life away is haply winged
for thine.
It is not good to stand alone the common cross to
bear,
But two or three like one must be, and God shall
hear their prayer.

THE BONNY BREAST-KNOTS

My first is for my darling's head,
My second for her hair,
My whole, in loops of white and red,
I bring her from the fair ;
She loves it better sung than said,
That bonny Scottish air.

R. I. P.

Rest thee, proud peerless face !

Rest thee, fair head !

There, in that other place,
Wearing each living trace,
Beauty, and scornful grace,
Peace to the dead !

Rest thee, fond wilful heart !

Where thou art fled !

Clear of the strife thou art,
Ours is the living smart,
Thine is the better part,
Peace to the dead !

Rest thee, beloved one !

Well hast thou sped !

Sand of thy glass is run,
Trouble and toil are done,
Sorrow to vex thee none,
Peace to the dead !

Rest, where we lay thee deep
 In thy lone bed ;
Tears never more to weep,
Vigil nor ward to keep,
Folded at last to sleep,
 Peace to the dead !

LOST

'Twas yet but May, and here and there
Pink and white the blossoms fell,
Quivering down through the summer air,
On the shaven sward so trim and bare.

Oh ! I remember well
The very network of the tree,
And its shadows dancing on her and me.
My old love, in the garden chair,
Looking upward soft and shy,
With her oval face and her rippling hair,
And the rich white dress she used to wear,
And her work laid idly by.
'Tis strange to think of now, and yet
'Twere stranger, harder, to forget.

Her eyes were deep with the light of love,
And on her hands, and on her face,
Because the south wind laughed above,
The blossoms showered apace.

She chid me gently, fondly, when
 Those blossoms to my lips I pressed ;
 But smiled her own dear smile, and then
 I laid them in my breast.
 My old love spoke, the words she said,
 I think she could not deem them true :
 “ The time shall come when these are dead,
 Our love shall wither too ! ”
 I held my peace, I bowed my head,
 Ah ! not for *me*, I knew.
 At last I whispered, “ Say not so,
 My darling, we are brave and strong ;
 And love so linked as ours, you know,
 Can strive and suffer long.
 Its web may well be warped with woe,
 But never crossed with wrong ! ”

She plied her work, beneath its modest bands
 Her face was hidden in her fragrant hair,
 The tears were falling on her busy hands,
 And thus we parted there.

* * * * *

The blue sea sparkles in the noontide ray,
 The eastern sun is flashing fiercely down,
 Here watch the hosts, and yonder, in the bay,
 Lies the beleaguered town,
 Hark ! the alarum sounds—the French *rappel*
 Collects its eager crowd the trench to fill,
 Our drums are beating and our trumpets swell,
 The *thin red line* is mustering on the hill.

White tents in thousands dot the wasted plain,
The canvas city, swarming like a fair,
Wakes up to life, while hungering for the
slain,

A vulture hangs expectant in the air !
But laugh, and jest, and ready cheer,
And cordial gripe of hand in hand,
Would make the game of death appear
But some athletic pastime here,
In this Crimean land.

“ Fall in ! ” the way they know too well,
The valley paved with shot and shell,
Accursed as the road to hell,
That none may travel back.

“ Fall in ! attention ! steady ! ” so
The sergeants hurry to and fro,
The ranks are closed, the columns grow,
And winding downwards sure and slow,
File off to the attack.

While booming out above their measured tread,
That dull explosion loads the summer air ;
It seems a requiem for the noble dead,
A knell that bids the living brave despair.
It ceaseth not—no respite even when
The daylight round of blood and strife is gone,
The hours come back, again, and yet again,
And ever and anon
The death-watch of a hundred thousand men
Ticks on—ticks on !
Through all the day—through all the night.
The pale moon rises from the sea,

And sheds a wan and ghostly light
 On him and me.
 For I was lying in the trench we made,
 Wrapped in my cloak and belted with my blade,
 A shattered gabion o'er my slumbers hung,
 And down beside me was my comrade flung.
 My comrade of a night, 'twas strange how deep,
 How calm and moveless seemed that solemn sleep.

Beneath his hand his ready firelock lay,
 His coarse red garb denoted common clay;
 A peasant's birth his homely form betrayed,
 A peasant's peaceful lot, ere yet he made
 His fatal choice—the bayonet for the spade.
 I heard the mattock clink, the earthwork fall,
 And yet my comrade slumbered through it all.
 But hark! as if to break the spell,
 The rush and whistle of a shell

Divides the midnight air.

The tools are dropped, the muskets ring,
 Afoot recumbent figures spring,
 From lip to lip the word they fling,

An oath, a jest, a prayer.

“Stand to your arms, my lads!” ’tis thus we form
 The living rampart it is death to storm.

But he alone seemed not to hear,
 My comrade never raised his head,
 I bowed me down to scan him near,
 In sorrow rather than in dread;

The moon was shining cold and bright,
My living instincts told me right,
His face was fixed—his face was white !

Great God ! the man was dead !
One stiffened arm was upward thrown, and where,
Beneath the toil-worn hand his wrist was bare,
Blue on the surface of its sallow skin,
A heart, a woman's name was punctured in.
By Heaven ! 'twas no unmanly tear I shed,
One common weakness linked me with the dead :
That moment, like a flash I seemed to see
My love's white dress beneath the summer tree ;
The next, with steadier pulse and calmer breath,
I took my place to meet or baffle death.

* * * * *

“ Cheer, boys, cheer ! ”

That old familiar strain
No longer mocked the listening ear,
Our troops were home again.
An English sun was shining bright,
And English meadows green and gold,
Were all a-glitter in the light,
How could she look so calm and cold ?
With wealth of leaves our tree was fair,
It shaded but a cheerless pair ;
My old love's face was pale and proud,
And I was all unused to bear
A wounded heart, and in despair,
My sorrow cried aloud.
“ Here, take them back, the tress of hair,
The rose, the ring, the glove,

My pride shall never stoop to wear
 For emblems but of friendly care
 The gifts that once were love.
 And couldst thou judge me thus unheard,
 Was that thy faith, is this my due ?
 Though thousands backed the slanderous word,
 Thou shouldst have *known* me true !
 Yes, take them back. I'll tell thee now,
 All thou hast been to me,
 How oft to death I bared my brow,
 How pure and strict I kept my vow,
 And all for love of thee !
 These very blossoms in my breast,
 That once from here I bore,
 Behold them, do they not attest
 The truth of him who served thee best ?
 Ay, mark them ! " Then I swore
 Her name from out my heart to wrest,
 And care for her no more.
 While in the mockery of the gaudy day
 I laughed, and flung those withered leaves away.

She kept her eyes from off my face,
 She dared not trust herself to look ;
 But stately, in her native grace,
 Though once I thought she shook,
 With calm, defiant courtesy, bending low,
 She left me, answering only " Be it so."

* * * * *

My old lost love,
 Once more I stand beneath the tree ;

Through branches bleak and bare above,
The wintry wind is blowing free.
The snow lies white upon the wold,
The clouds are dark behind the hill,
Around me all is blank and cold ;
My heart is colder, blanker still.
Ay, mock me in your dreary mirth,
Ye spectral branches, nod and wave,
For I am left alone on earth,
And she is in her grave.
No more to ask, and plead, and vow,
Too late for pardon or amends,
I'd give my whole existence now
We two had only parted friends.
It seems so hard to think for us
Not even hope can soften woe ;
'Tis cruel to have lost her thus,
I loved her so ! I loved her so !
Not even hope, yet good men say
Hope hath no home beneath the sky,
But dwells above, and only they
Know how to live who live to die.
It must be so, and thus I bear
My stripes, and bow me to the rod,
In trust, ere long to follow where
My darling's feet the path have trod ;
She surely will forgive me there,
When we have met before our God.

VOID

GONE! wholly gone! How cold and dark,
A cheerless world of hope bereft,
The beacon quenched, and not a spark,
In all the dull grey ashes left!

No more, no more a living part
In life's contending maze to own;
Dead to its kind, an empty heart
Feeds on itself, alone! alone!

The present but a blank, and worse,
No ray along the future cast,
All blighted by the blighting curse,
Except the past—except the past.

Ay, if the cup be crushed and spilt,
More than the sin, the loss I rue;
And if the cloud was black with guilt,
The silver light of love shone through.

And though the price be maddening pain,
One half their raptures to restore,
And live but half those hours again,
I'd pay the cruel price once more.

Dreams! dreams! Not backward flows the tide
Of life and love. It cannot be.
Well! thine the triumph and the pride,
The suffering and the shame for me.

LADY MARGARET

‘AND grant me his life,’ Lady Margaret cried,
“Oh! grant but his life to me,
And I’ll give ye my gold and my lands so wide,
An ye let my love go free.

“And spare me his life!” Lady Margaret prest,
“As ye hope for pardon above,
And I’ll give ye the heart from out of my breast
For the life of my own true love!”

They led him forth to the silent square,
In the grey of the morning sky,
And they gave him a cup of the red wine there,
To drink, and then to die.

Without the gate Lady Margaret stood,
And she watched for the rising sun,
Till it blushed on the stone-work and gleamed on
the wood,
And the headsman’s work was done.

Not a limb she stirred ; but when noon-day's glow
 Smote down on her temples bare,
A fiercer sun had not melted the snow
 That streaked Lady Margaret's hair

TRUE METAL

For this is love, and this alone,
Not counting cost nor grudging gain,
That builds its life into a throne,
And bids the idol reign.

That hopes and fears, yet seldom pleads,
And for a sorrow weakly borne
(Because it yields not words but deeds)
Can hide a gentle scorn.

In pride and pique that takes no part,
Of self and sin that bears no taint,
The homage of a knightly heart
For a woman and a saint.

Such love will wear through shine and shower,
Such love can bear to bide its time,
Unwearied at the vesper hour
As when the matins chime.

Though hate itself be fain to shrink,
It freely ventures lose or win ;
And friendship shivers on the brink,
While love leaps boldly in.

And love can strive against a host,
Can watch and wait and suffer long,
Still daring more, when fearing most,
In very weakness strong.

Though bruised and sore it never dies,
Though faint and weary standing fast,
It never fails. And thus the prize
Is won by love at last.

THE QUEEN OF THE ROSES

I WATCHED her in the morning hour,
So pure and fresh and fair,
A blossom bursting into flower,
That gladdened all the air.

I marked her shedding sweets around
Beneath the noon-tide ray,
The glory of the garden-ground,
The pride of the summer's day.

But long before the daylight's close
The southern blast awoke,
And crushed and tore the queenly rose
Beneath its pelting stroke.

Alas ! her petals strew the bower,
Yet, mangled though she lie,
The fragrance of that perished flower
Floats upward to the sky.

ESPERANCE

THE vines are thick, the clods are brown,
Hard is the toil, thy Lord's behest,
And weak the arm, though girt the gown,
And faint the heart within thy breast;
A noonday sun pours fiercely down,
My Brother, shall we rest ?

Strong is the foe, and sharp the fray,
With shivered lance and cloven shield
The champions fall, the ranks give way,
Along the front, across the field,
The stoutest knights are down. Then say,
My Brother, shall we yield ?

Forbid it, honour, courage, trust !
Forbid it, all that's brave and wise !
Toil freely on, since toil you must,
The day of harvest brings the prize ;
From black defeat, and crimsoned dust,
See golden victory rise !

Peace is the end and aim of strife,
The palms of heaven are earned below ;
Earth's vital powers are rich and rife,
Beneath her winding-sheet of snow ;
Death is itself the germ of life,
And joy the child of woe.

Then Espérance ! hope on, the fight
Is never lost, while fight we may ;
At home the hearth is shining bright,
Though yet unseen along the way ;
And the darkest hour of all the night
Is that which brings us day.

“THERE LEAVE THY GIFT UPON THE
ALTAR ”

ONCE in the promise and lustre of morning,
Little I dreamt that defeat would be mine,
Panting for trial, regardless of warning,
Love was like music, and life was like wine.
Now that the doom of the vanquished is spoken,
Now that the sun hath gone down to the sea,
Now that the heart hath been trampled and broken,
God of the helpless ! I bring it to Thee.

Earth was so fair, and so lavish of treasure,
Nature emblazoned her pages in gold ;
Vain was the glitter, illusive the pleasure,
A phantom to vanish, a tale to be told.
Here, where the glory of summer was glowing,
See, the dead leaf quivers bare on the tree,
Blasts of a desolate winter are blowing,
God of the homeless ! I shelter with Thee.

Gone the glad hope in a dawn of to-morrow,
Faded, forgotten, the noon of to-day,
Night drawing closer in sadness and sorrow,
Gloom in the valley and ghosts on the way ;
All the bright hours of the past I can reckon,
Memories of anguish bequeathing to me,
Man cannot guide me, nor angel can beckon,
God of the hopeless ! whom have I but Thee ?

A DIRGE

HILLS of Heaven, bright and shining,
 Bid thee welcome, spirits wait,
Thronging down to greet thee, twining
 Garlands at the golden gate ;
See ! before thee flash and quiver,
 Rising in eternal light,
Daybreak on the crystal river,
 And behind thee night !
Earth hath been wearing thee, now it is past,
 Providence sparing thee,
 Mercy preparing thee,
Angels are bearing thee homeward at last !

Quenched the bitter taste of sorrow,
 Lulled the angry throb of pain,
Glad, yet fearless of the morrow,
 Thine the bliss, without the bane.
Done with earthly trouble, taking
 Thought no more for earthly care,
Spent with earthly travail, waking
 For its wages there !

Earth hath been wearing thee, now it is past,
 Providence sparing thee,
 Mercy preparing thee,
Angels are bearing thee homeward at last !

Songs of Heaven, triumphant singing,
 Rank on rank, in waves of light,
March the immortal legions, bringing
 Crown of gold and robe of white ;
Far above them, lustre streaming
 Round its towers, unbuilt by hands,
Through a mist of glory beaming,
 See, the city stands !
Earth hath been wearing thee, now it is past,
 Providence sparing thee,
 Mercy preparing thee,
Angels are bearing thee homeward at last !

NIGHTFALL

LIKE a dream the past hath fled,
All its summer glories shed ;
Hope hath vanished, love is dead ;
 Lonely hours are mine to spend,
 Watching ever, watching ever,
 Waiting for the end.

Though with promise fair and bright,
Morning rose in golden light,
Ere my noon, came down the night ;
 Welcome to me as a friend,
 Watching ever, watching ever,
 Waiting for the end.

Sinking with the cruel load,
Sore and smarting to the goad,
Weary, weary of the road ;
 Heaven to me thy respite send !
 Watching ever, watching ever,
 Waiting for the end.

EPHEMERAL

It came with the merry May, love,
It bloomed with the summer prime,
In a dying year's decay, love,
It brightened the fading time ;
I thought it would last for a life, love,
But it went with the winter snow,
Only a year ago, love,
Only a year ago !

'Twas a plant with a deeper root, love,
Than the blighting eastern tree,
For it grew in my heart, and the fruit, love,
Was a bitter morsel to me ;
The poison is yet in my brain, love,
The thorn in my breast, for you know
'Twas only a year ago, love,
Only a year ago !

It never can bloom any more, love,
For the plough hath passed over the spot,

And the furrow hath left its score, love,
In the place where the flowers are not.
'Tis gone like a tale that is told, love,
Like a dream it hath fled, although
'Twas only a year ago, love,
Only a year ago !

COMMUNE MALUM

FEW the days so dark and dreary,
But are brightened by a gleam,
Seldom night so long and weary,
But 'tis lightened with a dream ;
So the fruit that never ripens
Blossomed once for me,
Far away in bonnie Scotland,
Down by the sea.

Pale and calm the wave was sleeping,
Pale and soft the skies above,
All was peace, and all in keeping
With the holy hush of love ;
While the pearl of price beside me
Promised mine to be,
Far away in bonnie Scotland,
Down by the sea.

Pearl I never thought could fail me,
Jewel of my darker lot,

How shall faith and truth avail me ?
All dishonoured and forgot.
Would that death had come between us,
While we yet were free,
Far away in bonnie Scotland,
Down by the sea.

Better that than shame and sorrow,
Trust betrayed and spirit strife,
Longing night and lonely morrow,
Are not these but death in life ?
All the heart I had lies buried,
There let it be !
Far away in bonnie Scotland,
Down by the sea.

VALERIA'S DEATH IN THE COURT OF THE TEMPLE

VOL. III. OF "THE GLADIATORS"

THE hand I love hath dealt the blow,
It is not hard to die like this ;
I never thought such joy to know,
That these poor lips to thine should grow,
And all my soul to meet thee flow
In one impassioned parting kiss.

The hand I love, 'tis mine at last,
I press it to my sinking breast ;
The tide of life is ebbing fast,
The game played out, the lot is cast,
The day gone down, the journey past,
And nightfall brings eternal rest.

The hand I love, 'twas hardly won,
Thou canst not prize it, girl, too high ;
'Tis freely given, my task is done,
The thread of fate is wound and spun,
The tempest lulls at set of sun,
And I can lay me down to die.

Dear hand I love, a long farewell !

Remorse and shame I scorn to own ;
Though hard she fought and low she fell,
Pride could not bid her love rebel,
And now her dying gasp shall tell,
Valeria's heart was thine alone.

THE WHITE WITCH

HAVE a care ! she is fair,
The White Witch there ;

In her crystal cave up a jewelled stair ;
She has spells for the living would waken the dead,
And they lurk in the line of her lip so red,
And they lurk in the turn of her delicate head,
And the golden gleam on her hair.

Forbear ! have a care
Of that beauty so rare ;

Of the pale proud face and the queen-like air,
And the love-lighted glances that deepen and shine,
And the coil of bright tresses that glisten and twine,
And the whispers that madden, like kisses or wine,
Too late ! too late to beware !

Never heed ! never spare !
Never fear ! never care !

It is sweeter to love, it is wiser to dare !

Lonely and longing, and looking for you,
She has woven the meshes you cannot break through;
She has taken your heart, you may follow it too,
Up the jewelled stair, good luck to you there !
In the crystal cave with the witch so fair,
The White Witch fond and fair !

FORGET ME NOT

FORGET me not, though I repine
Because you've found a fresher heart
To give it all that once was mine,
I'll say farewell, and part !

Because you've found a fairer face,
A nobler name, a lovelier lot,
I'll meekly bow, and yield my place,
But oh ! forget me not.

For all the world you've been to me,
And half the world you take away ;
The joy of summer from the tree,
The glory from the day.

To leave a dead year's barren curse,
A dead leaf whirling on the lawn,
A soulless, starless night, and worse,
A hopeless, helpless dawn.

Not much I sought. I had my dream ;
Dear love, your very words I quote,
“ A rose, the ripple of a stream,
A blue sky and a boat.”

But roses fade as roses blow,
And summer skies can lower and frown ;
The stream runs deep and dark, and so
This boat of ours went down.

Hard, hard, to learn the common task !
Hard, hard, to bear the common lot !
For pity's sake, 'tis all I ask,
Forget me not, forget me not !

ON A SKETCH,
BY AUGUSTUS LUMLEY, ESQ.,
OF A CAVALIER'S WIDOW LOOKING AT
HER HUSBAND'S PORTRAIT.

So bright a gleam, so dear a dream,
So few the happy years !
A loving past, too fair to last,
And nothing left but tears.

Melts into space, thy portrait's grace,
As daylight into gloom ;
The wreath I braid must droop and fade,
Ere it can deck thy tomb.

What have I left, of thee bereft ?
My darling bright and brave,
But long lone hours, dead hopes and flowers,
A picture and a grave !

“IMBUTA”

THE new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old,
The heart is all athirst again,
The drops are all of gold ;
We thought the cup was broken,
And we thought the tale was told,
But the new wine, the new wine
It tasteth like the old !

The flower of life had faded,
The leaf was in its fall,
The winter seemed so early
To have reached us, once for all ;
But now the buds are breaking,
There is grass above the mould,
And the new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old !

The earth had grown so dreary,
The sky so dull and grey ;

One was weeping in the darkness,
One was sorrowing through the day;
But a light from heaven gleams again,
On water, wood, and wold,
And the new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old !

For the loving lips are laughing,
And the loving face is fair,
Though a phantom hand is on the board,
And phantom eyes are there ;
The phantom eyes are soft and sad,
The phantom hand is cold,
But the new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old !

We dare not look, we turn away,
The precious draught to drain,
'Twere worse than madness, surely now,
To lose it all again ;
To quivering lip, with clinging grasp,
The fatal cup we hold,
For the new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old !
And life is short, and love is life,
And so the tale is told,
Though the new wine, the new wine,
It tasteth like the old !

“RIDING THROUGH THE BROOM”

THERE'S music in the gallery,
 There's dancing in the hall,
And the girl I love is moving
 Like a goddess through the ball.
Amongst a score of rivals
 You're the fairest in the room,
But I like you better, Marion,
 Marion, Marion.
I like you better, Marion,
 Riding through the broom.

It was but yester morning,
 The vision haunts me still,
That we looked across the valley,
 As our horses rode the hill,
And I bade you read my riddle,
 And I waited for my doom,
While the spell was on us, Marion,
 Marion, Marion,
The spell was on us, Marion,
 Riding through the broom.

The wild bird carolled freely,
 The May was dropping dew,

The day was like a day from heaven,
From Heaven, because of you ;
And on my heart there broke a light,
Dispelling weeks of gloom,
While I whispered to you, Marion,
Marion, Marion,
While I whispered to you, Marion,
Riding through the broom.

"What is freer than the wild bird ?
What is sweeter than the May ?
What is fresher than the morning,
And brighter than the day ?"
In your eye came deeper lustre,
On your cheek a softer bloom,
And I think you guessed it, Marion,
Marion, Marion,
I think you guessed it, Marion,
Riding through the broom.

And now they flutter round you,
These insects of an hour,
And I must stand aloof and wait,
And watch my cherished flower ;
I glory in her triumphs,
And I grudge not her perfume,
But I love you best, my Marion,
Marion, Marion,
I love you best, my Marion,
Riding through the broom.

THE PROUD LADYE

“ 'Tis a cheerless morn for a gallant to swim,
And the moat shines cold and clear ;
Sir Knight, I was never yet baulked of my whim,
And I long for the lilies that float on the brim,
Go, bring me those blossoms here ! ”
Then I offered them low on my bended knee,
“ They are faded and wet,” quoth the Proud Ladye.

A jay screamed out from the topmost pine,
That waved by the castle wall,
And she vowed if I loved her I'd never decline
To harry his nest for this mistress of mine,
Though I broke my own neck in the fall ;
Then I brought her the eggs and she flouted me,
“ You would climb too high,” said the Proud Ladye.

The lists were dressed and the lances in rest,
And the knightly band arrayed ;

'Twas stout Sir Hubert who bore him best,
With a queen's white glove carried high on his crest,
Till I shore it away with my blade.
But I reeled as I laid it before her. "See,
It is soiled with your blood," said the Proud Ladye.

"You have sweet red lips, and an ivory brow,
But your heart is as cold as a stone,
Though I loved you so fondly and truly, now
I have broken my fetters and cancelled my vow,
You may sigh at your lattice alone ;
There are women as fair who are kinder to me,
Go look for another, my Proud Ladye !"

Her tears fell fast, she began to rue,
When she counted the cost of her pride,
Till she played and lost it she never knew
The worth of a heart that is loving and true ;
And she beckoned me back to her side,
While softly she whispered, "I love but thee !"
So I won her at last, my Proud Ladye.

“ JOHN ANDERSON ”

THINE eyes are meeker, sadder now,
Though softly still they shine,
And on thy staid and gentle brow
I trace the thoughtful line.

The voice is dearest of music still,
Though its tones are hushed and low ;
While deep to my heart those accents thrill,
As they thrilled to it long ago.

And here and there a silver thread
Amongst thy locks I spy,
Where the hand of time on thy dainty head
Hath but blessed it, and so passed by.

For the golden years have fled to the past,
And indeed, if truth must be told,
While the wheel spins bravely, the flax wears fast,
And love, we are growing old.

We are growing old. Oh ! the morn was bright,
And rich was the noontide ray,
But the sunset hour with its fading light,
Is the sweet of the summer's day.

And though spring be so fair with her laughing eyes,
Like a maid in her early bloom,
There's a holier calm in the autumn skies,
When the harvest is gathered home.

And a task is in store for the mountain rill,
Though its youth be so fresh and free,
It must fatten the pasture, and feed the mill
Ere it steal to its rest in the sea.

For onward, onward, the river flows,
And widens by the way—
And many a noble reach it shows,
And many a sunlit bay.

Calmer, and broader, and seaward still,
Till headland and cape be past ;
And the stream that was once but a trickling rill,
Is lost in the deep at last.

We must all float on with the silent stream,
Float out to the silent sea,
Where the soul wakes up from a restless dream,
In the hush of eternity !

“ SOUL MUSIC ”

I KNOW I have heard them sing, child, and I know
that they spoke to me,
With my mother's arms about me, while I sat on my
mother's knee ;
And she told me of love that saved us, and a Father
we had on high,
And the grave that we need not fear, child, and the
soul that can never die.
In the gleam of the summer lime-trees, in the glow
of the summer's day,
And I heard them singing faintly then, for they
seemed so far away.

Again, when I walked with the loved one; you
remembered the loved one, dear,
And the smile that is gone from among us, and the
voice we no longer hear,
The voice was so tender and earnest, that joy was too
deep for mirth,
And the heart was too full for speech, child, and
heaven had come down on earth.

Not a drop in the cup seemed wanting, the thirst of a
life to fill,
And farther and fainter the song died out—but I
heard the angels still.

Then the loved one was taken from me, and I bowed
my head in my hand,
For my bark was free on a silent sea, and I was alone
on the strand ;
The day had gone down for me, child, the light of my
life was fled,
And I longed for the sleep of an endless night, and to
lay me beside the dead.
Then I clung to the arm that smote me, with a prayer
from a bended knee,
And my heart climbed up to meet the song—and the
song floated down to me.

I have heard it so often since, child, at church on the
holy morn
When the music swells, and the praise goes up, that
"to us a Child is born."
And here in the hush of my home life, and there
where the little ones play,
And once in the tremble of twilight at the turn of the
night and the day ;
Each time they sing in a sweeter strain, they call in
a clearer tone,
And I look for the Reaper to house the grain, and the
Master to claim His own.

I think it will not be long, child, they are bidding me
home at last,
To the place where the joy of the future shall be
linked on the love of the past—
Where the houseless shall seek a shelter, the lonely
shall find a friend,
Where the heart's desire shall be granted that hath
trusted and loved to the end;
Where there's fruit in the gardens of heaven from
hopes that on earth were betrayed,
Where there's rest for the soul life-wearied, that hath
striven, and suffered, and prayed.

MARY HAMILTON

THERE'S a bonny wild-rose on the mountain side,
Mary Hamilton.
In the glare of noon she hath drooped and died,
Mary Hamilton.

Soft and still is the evening shower,
Pattering kindly on brake and bower,
But it falls too late for the perished flower,
Mary Hamilton.

There's a lamb lies lost at the head of the glen,
Mary Hamilton.
Lost and missed from sheiling and pen,
Mary Hamilton.
The shepherd has sought it through toil and heat,
And sore he strove when he heard it bleat,
Ere he wins to the lamb, it lies dead at his feet,
Mary Hamilton.

The mist is gathering ghostly and chill,
Mary Hamilton.
And the weary maid cometh down from the hill,
Mary Hamilton.

The weary maid, but she's home at last,
And she trieth the door, but the door is fast,
For the sun is down and the curfew past,

Mary Hamilton.

Too late for the rose, the evening rain,

Mary Hamilton.

Too late for the lamb, the shepherd's pain.

Mary Hamilton.

Too late at the door the maiden's stroke,

Too late the plea when the doom hath been spoke,

Too late the balm when the heart is broke,

Mary Hamilton.

LOVE'S PEDIGREE

WILD Folly, certain legends tell,
Was wedded to a maid,
A dusky maid that loved to dwell,
In drowsy summer shade.

Their offspring is a fairy elf,
A thing of tricks and wiles,
He plays with hearts to please himself,
And when they break he smiles.

Unpitied pain, and toil in vain,
That little tyrant brings ;
And those who fain would slip his chain
Must cheat him of his wings.

To Cupid's torture, you may guess,
Each parent lends a part,
The chain, the toil, from Idleness,
While Folly adds the smart.

CATHCART'S HILL

IN MEMORIAM

ONCE again we rally, comrades,
Comrades of the old brigade !
Welcome to the triple badges,
Star and Thistle and Grenade.
Once again we take our places,
Once again the healths we fill,
But we miss remembered faces,
And we think of Cathcart's Hill.

Round the circle jests are passing,
Stingless gibe and harmless jeer ;
Some are laughing, some are quaffing,
Mirth is half the soldier's cheer ;
Loudly ring the glad young voices,
But a whisper, soft and still,
Bids the heart that most rejoices
Spare a thought for Cathcart's Hill.

Needs no colour waving o'er us,
Many a hazard to bring back
Of the bivouac and the leaguer,
Of the trench and the attack.
Seems again the Advance is sounding,
And the minié whistling shrill,
Batteries playing, mortars pounding,
On the slopes by Cathcart's Hill.

How those colours have been carried
Needs no verse of mine to tell;
How the loyal rallied round them,
How the brave beneath them fell.
Laurel wreaths are snatched by glory,
Dripping from a crimson rill :
Some are here to tell the story,
Some are there on Cathcart's Hill.

Oh ! the merry laughing comrade !
Oh ! the true and kindly friend,
Glowing hopes and lofty courage,
Love and life, and this the end !
Yet a balm from grief we borrow,
Though the eye with tears may fill ;
Half is pride and half is sorrow,
While we speak of Cathcart's Hill.

Noble names, devoted nobly,
High ancestral deeds to share,
Lowlier valour, waged as freely,
All alike are mouldering there.

Homes are lonely yet without them,
Women's hearts are aching still,
Though a glory hangs about them,
In their graves on Cathcart's Hill.

While a soldier's name is honoured,
While a soldier's fame is dear,
Nowhere shall they be forgotten,
Least of all, forgotten here.
In the roll of those who perished,
England's mission to fulfil,
None more proudly, fondly cherished,
Than the dead of Cathcart's Hill

“AVE CÆSAR! MORITURI TE
SALUTANT!”

WINE in thy visage, roses on thy brow,
Thine arm begirt with blazing clasp and gem;
Patricians, Commons, eager but to bow
And kiss thy garment's broad and crimson hem.
Barbarians, Romans, shouting Hail! and thou,
Th' Imperial lord of earth, and us, and them,
Great patron! hearken to thy swordsmen's cry,
“Good-morrow, Cæsar! we are here to die!”

No Eastern slaves, the dainty fan to hold,
No satraps we, the jewelled train to bear,
Nor gaudy guards with helm and shield of gold,
Nor silken eunuchs, plump, and smooth, and fair;
But champions of the arena, firm and bold,
Men prompt to strike, as they are loth to spare;
Those fiercest fight who have not where to fly:
“Good-morrow, Cæsar! we are here to die!”

A hopeful sight, forsooth ! a gallant show !

Piled to the top in heaps, they sit and stand,
Rank upon rank, and row succeeding row,

A sea of faces turned to greet our band.
Aloft the canvas awning ; and below,

The dazzling sweep of white and thirsty sand ;
Far above all, a blue and laughing sky :

“ Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! ”

And now the bounds are set, the match is made ;

One shakes the prong across his shoulder bare,
In beaded folds the dangling net is laid ;

Close at his elbow stalks his deadly pair,
Armed with the vizored helm and gleaming blade.

An hundred more are boasting, jesting there,
Mirth on the lip, defiance in the eye :

“ Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! ”

The air is sick and tainted ; well I know

Behind yon boards the Libyan monster lies,
Yawns for his prey and yearns to reach his foe,

With dripping maw, and sullen, sleepless eyes.
Soon loud applause to dumb suspense shall grow,

When man and brute are grappling for the prize,
The tiger and the swordsman—he and I :

“ Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! ”

The time draws near—even now I seem to feel

The reeking gash—the torn and dragging limb ;
Though to his heart I drive the quivering steel,

What boots an athlete's arm to cope with *him* ?

Beneath that crushing gripe my senses reel,
White forms and whiter faces round me swim,
Paler and paler, fading ere they fly :
"Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! "

A goodly lot is ours, in truth, who drive,
To please a cruel mob, the swordsman's trade ;
Resting to drink, and roused again to strive,
We drop the beaker, but to grasp the blade.
In death derided, pampered when alive,
To fill the gaps by wanton slaughter made—
Gaps that a later brood must still supply :
"Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! "

I have a fair young wife at home—and he
A loving mother ; and Rufellus leaves
Two bright-haired urchins, reaching to his knee ;
With every stroke some kindred bosom grieves.
'Tis sad to hear the shouts—'tis sad to see
How few the fallen a Roman crowd reprieves ;
In grim despair the prostrate champions lie :
"Good-morrow, Cæsar ! we are here to die ! "

To-morrow where shall be the long array
That now defiles so bravely past thy throne—
The victims and the heroes of to-day ?
Yet comes to-morrow not for us alone.
The bow is bent, nor Jove himself can stay,
Nor fate recall, the shaft that once had flown ;
And ours hath struck, and thine is hovering nigh :
"Good-morrow, Cæsar ! all are here to die ! "

YSONDE WITH THE WHITE HAND

TRISTREM lies desperately wounded. The gangrene becomes daily worse, and can be cured by none but Ysonde of Cornwall. Tristrem despatches Ganhardin to Ysonde, with his ring as a token, directing him to communicate to the queen the extremity of his distress. He desires him to take with him two sails, one white and the other black; the former to be hoisted on his return in case Ysonde should accompany him to Brittany, and the latter if his embassy should be unsuccessful. Ysonde of Brittany overhears the conversation, and resolves to be avenged of her husband for his infidelity. Ganhardin goes to England disguised as a merchant. Ysonde disguises herself, and accompanies Ganhardin on board ship to undertake Sir Tristrem's cure. They approach the coast of Brittany displaying the white sail. Ysonde of Brittany perceives the vessel, and knows from the token of the white sail that her rival is on board. Fired with jealousy, she hastens to Sir Tristrem, and tells him the ship is in sight. He conjures her to tell him the colour of the sails. She informs him they are black, on which, concluding himself forsaken by Ysonde, Tristrem sinks back in despair and dies. Ysonde of Cornwall arrives, learns the death of her lover, and expires for grief.

[“Sir Tristrem.” Abridged from the French metrical romance in the style of “Tomas of Erceldoun,” by Sir Walter Scott.]

“ YSONDE of Brittany,
With the white hand,—
Cleaving the western sea,
Coasting the strand,

Look if a ship there be
Sailing to land,—
Ysonde of Brittany,
With the white hand ! ”

“ Red in the western sea,
Sinketh the sun,
Never a ship to thee
Saileth but one ;
Love on her deck may be,
Leechcraft is none :
Husband, so false to me,
Ill hast thou done ! ”

“ Ysonde, my troth and plight,
Are they not thine ?
Wife, lest I die to-night,
Read me the sign.
Sail hath she black or white
Dipping the brine ?
Read me the truth aright,
Fair wife of mine ! ”

“ Black as the raven’s wing
Flouting the slain,
Black as the cloud in spring
Breaking to rain ;
Black as the wrongs that fling
Shame on us twain,
Flappeth her sail to bring
Succour in vain ! ”

Drooped his unconquered head,
Paler he grew ;
Death on his marriage-bed
Held him, he knew.
Word of reproach he said,
Never but two ;
Breathed, while the spirit fled,
“ Ysonde—untrue ! ”

Ysonde of Cornwall, see
Heart-broken, stand ;
Tristrem was dead ere she
Leaped to the land.
Lulled may thy vengeance be,
Deftly 'twas planned ;
Ysonde of Brittany,
With the white hand !

HUNTING SONGS



THE LORD OF THE VALLEY

HUNTERS are fretting, and hacks in a lather,
Sportsmen arriving from left and from right ;
Bridle-roads bringing them, see how they gather,
Dotting the meadows in scarlet and white.
Foot-people staring and horsemen preparing,
Now there's a murmur, a stir, and a shout ;
Fresh from his carriage, as bridegroom in marriage,
The Lord of the Valley leaps gallantly out.

Time, the avenger, neglecting or scorning,
Gazes about him in beauteous disdain,
Lingers to toy with the whisper of morning,
Daintily, airily, paces the plain.
Then in a second, his course having reckoned,
Line that all Leicestershire cannot surpass,
Fleet as the swallow, when summer-winds follow,
The Lord of the Valley skims over the grass.

Where shall we take him? Ah! now for the tussle;
These are the beauties, can stoop, and can fly,
Down go their noses, together they bustle,
Dashing and flinging, and scoring to cry.
Never stand dreaming, while yonder they're streaming,
If ever you meant it, man, mean it to-day!
Bold ones are riding and fast ones are striding;
The Lord of the Valley is forward, away!

Hard on his track o'er the open, and facing
The cream of the country, the pick of the chase,
Mute as a dream, his pursuers are racing;
Silence, you know's the criterion of pace.
Swarming and driving, while man and horse striving,
By hugging and cramming scarce live with them
still,
The fastest are failing, the truest are tailing;
The Lord of the Valley is over the hill!

Yonder a steed is rolled up with his master,
Here, in a double, another lies cast;
Faster and faster come grief and disaster,
All but the good ones are weeded at last.
Hunters so limber at water and timber,
Now on the causeway are fain to be led;
Beat, but still going, a countryman sowing
Has sighted the Lord of the Valley ahead!

There in the bottom, see, sluggish and idle,
Steals the dark stream where the willow-tree grows;

Harden your heart and catch hold of your bridle,
Steady him ! rouse him ! and over he goes.
Look, in a minute a dozen are in it,
But forward ! hark forward ! for draggled and blown,
A check though desiring, with courage untiring,
The Lord of the Valley is holding his own.

Onward we struggle in sorrow and labour,
Lurching and lobbing, and " bellows to mend ; "
Each, while he smiles at the plight of his neighbour,
Only is anxious to get to the end.
Horses are flagging, hounds drooping and lagging,
But gathering down yonder, where press as they
may,
Mobbed, driven, and haunted, but game and un-
daunted,
The Lord of the Valley stands proudly at bay.

Now here's to the Baron, and all his supporters,
The thrusters, the skilters, the whole of the tale ;
And here's to the fairest of all hunting quarters,
The widest of pastures, three cheers for the Vale ;
For the fair lady rider, the rogue who beside her
Finds breath in a gallop his suit to advance,
The hounds for our pleasure, that time us the measure,
The Lord of the Valley that leads us the dance !

THE GALLOPING SQUIRE

COME, I'll show you a country that none can surpass,
For a flyer to cross like a bird on the wing.
We have acres of woodland and oceans of grass,
We have game in the autumn and cubs in the spring,
We have scores of good fellows hang out in the shire,
But the best of them all is the Galloping Squire.

The Galloping Squire to the saddle has got,
While the dewdrop is melting in gems on the thorn,
From the kennel he's drafted the pick of his lot,
How they swarm to his cheer! How they fly to
his horn!
Like harriers turning or chasing like fire,
"I can trust 'em, each hound!" says the Galloping
Squire.

One wave of his arm, to the covert they throng;
"Yoi! wind him! and rouse him! By Jove he's
away!"

Through a gap in the oaks see them speeding along,
O'er the open like pigeons : " They *mean* it to-day !
You may jump till you're sick—you may spur till you
tire !

For it's catch 'em who can ! " says the Galloping
Squire.

Then he takes the old horse by the head, and he sails
In the wake of his darlings, all ear and all eye,
As they come in his line, o'er banks, fences, and rails,
The cramped ones to creep, and the fair ones to fly.
It's a *very* queer place that will put in the mire
Such a rare one to ride as the Galloping Squire.

But a fallow has brought to their noses the pack,
And the pasture beyond is with cattle-stains spread ;
One wave of his arm, and the Squire in a crack
Has lifted and thrown in the beauties at head.
" On a morning like this, it's small help you require,
But he's forward, I'll swear ! " says the Galloping
Squire.

So forty fair minutes they run and they race,
'Tis a heaven to some ! 'tis a lifetime to all ;
Though the horses we ride are such gluttons for pace,
There are stout ones that stop, there are safe ones
that fall.

But the names of the vanquished need never transpire
For they're all in the rear of the Galloping Squire.

Till the gamest old varmint that ever drew breath,
All stiffened and draggled, held high for a throw,
O'er the squire's jolly visage, is grinning in death
Ere he dashes him down to be eaten below ;
While the daws flutter out from a neighbouring spire
At the thrilling who-whoop of the Galloping Squire.

And the labourer at work, and the lord in his hall,
Have a jest or a smile when they hear of the sport,
In ale or in claret he's toasted by all,
For they never expect to see more of the sort.
And long may it be ere he's forced to retire,
For we breed very few like the Galloping Squire.

“ A RUM ONE TO FOLLOW, A BAD ONE
TO BEAT ”

Come, I'll give you the health of a man we all know,
A man we all swear by, a friend of our own ;
With the hounds running hardest, he's safest to go,
And he's always in front, and he's often alone.
A rider unequalled—a sportsman complete,
A rum one to follow, a bad one to beat.

As he sits in the saddle, a baby could tell
He can hustle a sticker, a flyer can spare ;
He has science, and nerve, and decision as well,
He knows where he's going and means to be there.
The first day I saw him they said at the meet,
“ That's a rum one to follow, a bad one to beat.”

We threw off at the Castle, we found in the holt,
Like wildfire the beauties went streaming away ;
From the rest of the field he came out like a bolt,
And he tackled to work like a schoolboy to play,
As he rammed down his hat, and got home in his seat,
This rum one to follow, this bad one to beat.

'Twas a caution, I vow, but to see the man ride !

O'er the rough and the smooth he went sailing along ;
And what Providence sent him, he took in his stride,
Though the ditches were deep, and the fences were
strong.

Thinks I, " If he leads me I'm in for a treat,
With this rum one to follow, this bad one to beat ! "

Ere they'd run for a mile, there was room in the front,
Such a scatter and squander you never did see !
And I honestly own I'd been out of the hunt,
But the broad of his back was the beacon for me.
So I kept him in sight, and was proud of the feat,
This rum one to follow, this bad one to beat !

Till we came to a rasper as black as your hat,
You couldn't see over—you couldn't see through ;
So he made for the gate, knowing what he was at,
And the chain being round it, why—over he flew !
While I swore a round oath that I needn't repeat,
At this rum one to follow, this bad one to beat.

For a place I liked better I hastened to seek,
But the place I liked better I sought for in vain ;
And I honestly own, if the truth I must speak,
That I never caught sight of my leader again.
But I thought, " I'd give something to have his
receipt,
This rum one to follow, this bad one to beat. "

They told me that night he went best through the run,
They said that he hung up a dozen to dry,
When a brook in the bottom stopped most of their fun,
But I know that I never went near it, not I.
For I found it a fruitless attempt to compete
With this rum one to follow, this bad one to beat.

So we'll fill him a bumper as deep as you please,
And we'll give him a cheer ; for, deny it who can,
When the country is roughest he's most at his ease ;
When the run is severest, he rides like a man.
And the pace cannot stop, nor the fences defeat,
This rum one to follow, this bad one to beat.

“A DAY’S RIDE A LIFE’S ROMANCE”

WHEN the early dawn is stealing
O’er the moorland edge, revealing
All the tender tints of morning ere she flushes into day,
Then beneath her window, shaking
Bit and bridle, while she’s waking,
Stands a bonny steed comparisoned to bear my love
away ;
By hill and holt to follow,
Hound and horn, and huntsman’s holloa,
Follow ! follow ! where they lure us ; follow, follow
as we may !

When the chase is onward speeding,
With its boldest spirits leading,
When the red is on the rowel, and the foam is on the
rein,
Far in front her form is fleeting,
And her gentle heart is beating,
With the rapture of the revel, as it sweeps across the
plain ;

Then I press by dint of riding
Where my beacon star is guiding,
And the laggard spurring madly hurries after us in
vain.

O'er the open still careering,
Fence and furrow freely clearing,
Like the winds of heaven leaving little trace of where
we pass ;
With that merry music ringing,
Father Time is surely flinging
Golden sand about the moments as he shakes them
from the glass :
Horn and hound are chiming gladly,
Horse and man are vying madly
In the glory of the gallop. Forty minutes on the
grass !

Till, by yonder group, dismounted,
Group that's quickly told and counted,
Hark, the pack are baying fiercely round their quarry
lying dead ;
But from eyes that shine so brightly
Such a spectacle unsightly
Must be hidden, as we hide each thing of sorrow and
of dread ;
So she gathers up her tresses,
And with loving hand caresses
Neck and shoulder of the bonny steed, and homeward
turns his head.

Every sweet must have its bitter,
And the time has come to quit her,
Oh! the night is falling darker for the happy day
that's done;
Now I wish I were the bridle,
In the fingers of mine idol,
Now I wish I were the bonny steed that bore her
through the run;
For I fain would still be nearest
To my loveliest and dearest,
And I fain would be the truest slave that ever
worshipped one!

“THE CLIPPER THAT STANDS IN THE
STALL AT THE TOP”

*(Dedicated to the HON. CHARLES WHITE, Scots
Fusilier Guards)*

Go strip him, lad ! Now, sir, I think you'll declare
Such a picture you never set eyes on before ;
He was bought in at Tatt's for three hundred I
swear,

And he's worth all the money to look at, and more ;
For the pick of the basket, the show of the shop,
Is the Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

In the records of racing I read their career,
There were none of the sort but could gallop and
stay ;
At Newmarket his sire was the best of his year,
And the Yorkshiremen boast of his dam to this
day ;
But never a likelier foal did she drop
Than this Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

A head like a snake, and a skin like a mouse,
An eye like a woman, bright, gentle, and brown,
With loins and a back that would carry a house,
And quarters to lift him smack over a town !
What's a leap to the rest, is to him but a hop,
This Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

When the country is deepest, I give you my word
'Tis a pride and a pleasure to put him along ;
O'er fallow and pasture he sweeps like a bird,
And there's nothing too wide, nor too high, nor too
strong ;
For the ploughs cannot choke, nor the fences can
crop,
This Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

Last Monday we ran for an hour in the Vale,
Not a bullfinch was trimmed, of a gap not a sign !
All the ditches were double, each fence had a rail,
And the farmers had locked every gate in the line ;
So I gave him the office, and over them—Pop !
Went the Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

I'd a lead of them all when we came to the brook,
A big one—a bumper—and up to your chin ;
As he threw it behind him, I turned for a look,
There were eight of us had it, and seven got in !
Then he shook his lean head when he heard them go
plop !
This Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.



“I’d a lead of them all when we came to the brook.”

Ere we got to the finish, I counted but few,
And never a coat without dirt, but my own ;
To the good horse I rode all the credit was due,
When the others were tiring, he scarcely was
blown ;
For the best of the pace is unable to stop
The Clipper that stands in the stall at the top.

You may put on his clothes ; every sportsman, they
say,
In his lifetime has one that outrivals the rest,
So the pearl of *my* casket I've shown you to-day,
The gentlest, the gamest—the boldest, the best ;
And I never will part, by a sale or a swop,
With my Clipper that stands in the stall at the top !

THE WARD

(Dedicated, by permission, to MRS. J. L. MORROGH)

THERE are flowers on the earth, there are gems in
the sea,

There's the pearl and the ruby—the lily, the rose—
But the emerald green is the jewel for me,

And the shamrock's the dearest of posies that
grows.

For the flower and the gem are combined in the
sward,

That gives pleasure and pace to a run with the Ward.

Oh ! the harrier makes music that's sweet to the ear,
And the note of the foxhound rings home to the
brain,

But the sport we love best is a spin with the deer,

O'er the pick of the pasture, the pride of the plain ;
Where the men of the hunt, and the men of the
sword,

Are at work with their spurs to ride up to the Ward.

Not a moment to lose if you'd share in the fun ;
Of a gate, or a gap, not a sign to be seen !
Ere the dancers are ready, the music's begun,
To the tune, if you like it, of " Wearing the Green " ;
For a horse may be grassed, and his rider be floored,
In a couple of shakes, when they start with the Ward.

Now loose him ! now lift him ! Your soul what a
place !

An embankment between, and a yawner each side ;
What delivered us over alone was the pace,
Never spare when you're " on an engagement " to
ride !

For the whip must be drawn, and the flanks must be
scored,

If you're called on in earnest to live with the Ward.

Then forward ! The hounds are still fleeting away,
How they drive for a scent—how they press for a
view !

Now they have it ! and strain at the flanks of their
prey,

As he scuds by Dun-shaughlin and on to Kilrue ;
While the field are beat off, from the lout to the lord,
For the tail of a comet's a joke to the Ward.

The boldest are baffled—the best are out-paced,
For " wreckers " and ropes, at each fence there's a
call ;

What with riders dismounted, and horses disgraced,
You'd think not a leap was left in us at all !

But the humours your bard hasn't breath to record,
For disasters came thick at the pace of the Ward.

Like fairies we whirl by the fairy-house,—see,
They are down in the gripe, and the mare's on the
man !
But a voice cometh up from the deep, and says he,
“It's pretendin' ye are ! Sure, ye're schamin' it,
Fan ! ”
So we leave them in hopes they may soon be restored ;
There's no time to look back in a run with the Ward.

At the finish how few are there left in the game !
And the few that are left seem well pleased to be
there ;
But an Irishman rides for the sport, not the fame,
And it's little he'll trouble, and less that he'll care
For the stakes, when the pieces are swept from the
board ;
It's “divarsion ” he loves,—so he hunts with the
Ward.

Then success to the master ! more power ! and long
life !
Success to his horses, his hounds, and his men !
And the brightest of days to his fair lady-wife !
May she lead us, and beat us again and again !
Thus from sorrow to borrow all fate can afford ;
With Morrogh, to-morrow, we'll hunt with the Ward.

THE BULLFINCH

My first is the point of an Irishman's tale,
My second's a tail of its own to disclose;
But I warn you in time. lest your courage should
fail,
If you're troubled with either the shakes or the
slows,
That the longer you look at my whole in the vale,
The bigger, and blacker, and bitterer it grows!

“THE GOOD GREY MARE”

*(Dedicated to the HONOURABLE ROBERT GRIMSTON,
in kindly remembrance of many happy days
and pleasant rides)*

OH! once I believed in a woman's kiss,
I had faith in a flattering tongue;
For lip to lip was a promise of bliss,
When lips were smooth and young.
But now the beard is grey on my cheek,
And the top of my head gets bare;
So little I speak, like an Arab scheik,
But put my trust in my mare.

For loving looks grow hard and cold,
Fair heads are turned away,
When the fruit has been gathered,—the tale been told,
And the dog has had his day;
But chance and change 'tis folly to rue
And say I, the devil may care!
Nor grey nor blue are so bonny and true,
As the bright brown eye of my mare!

It is good for a heart that is chilled and sad
With the death of a vain desire,
To borrow a glow that shall make it glad
From the warmth of a kindred fire.
And I leap to the saddle, a man indeed ;
For all I can do and dare,
In the power and speed that are mine at need,
While I sit on the back of my mare !

With the fair wide heaven above outspread
The fair wide plain to meet,
With the lark and his carol high over my head,
And the bustling pack at my feet,—
I feel no fetter, I know no bounds,
I am free as a bird in the air ;
While the covert resounds, in a chorus of hounds,
Right under the nose of the mare.

We are in for a gallop,—away ! away !
I told them my beauty could fly ;
And we'll lead them a dance ere they catch us to-day,
For we *mean* it, my lass and I !
She skims the fences, she scours the plain,
Like a creature winged, I swear,
With snort and strain, on the yielding rein ;
For I'm bound to humour the mare.

They have pleached it strong, they have dug it wide,
They have turned the baulk with the plough ;
A horse that can cover the whole in its stride
Is cheap at a thousand, I vow ;

So I draw her together, and over we sail,
With a yard and a half to spare—
Bank, bullfinch, and rail—'tis the Curse of the
vale,
But I leave it all to the mare !

Away ! away ! they've been running to kill,
With never a check from the find ;
Away ! away ! we are close to them still,
And the field are *furlongs* behind !
They can hardly deny they were out of the game,
Lost half " the fun of the fair,"
Though the envious blame and the jealous exclaim,
" How that old fool buckets his mare ! "

Who—whoop ! they have him,—they're round him ;
how
They worry and tear when he's down !
'Twas a stout hill-fox when they found him, now
'Tis a hundred tatters of brown !
And the riders arriving as best they can,
In panting plight, declare,
That " First in the van was the old grey man,
Who stands by his old grey mare."

I have lived my life—I am nearly done,—
I have played the game all round ;
But I freely admit that the best of my fun
I owe it to horse and hound.

With a hopeful heart and a conscience clear,
I can laugh in your face, Black Care ;
Though you're hovering near, there's no room for you
here,
On the back of my good grey mare.

THE KING OF THE KENNEL

(Dedicated to JOHN ANSTRUTHER THOMSON, Esq.,
by G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE)

“ Clara fuga, ante alios, et primus in æquore pulvis ”

THE bitch from the Belvoir, the dog from the Quorn—
The pick of their litter our puppy was born ;
And the day he was entered he flew to the horn,
But rating and whipcord he treated with scorn.

*Gently, Bachelor,
Have a care ! Have a care !*

So eager to find, and so gallant to draw,
Though a wilder in covert a huntsman ne'er saw.
'Twas a year and a half ere he'd listen to law,
And many's the leveret hung out of his maw.

*Ware hare, Bachelor ;
Ware hare ! Ware hare !*

On the straightest of legs and the roundest of feet,
With ribs like a frigate his timbers to meet,

With a fashion and fling and a form so complete,
That to see him dance over the flags is a treat !

*Here, here, boy ! Bachelor !
Handsome and good.*

But fashion and form without nose are in vain ;
And in March or mid-winter, storm, sunshine, and rain,
When the line has been foiled, or the sheep leave a
stain,

His fox he accounts for again and again.

*Yooi ! Wind him, Bachelor.
All through the wood !*

He guides them in covert, he leads them in chase ;
Though the young and the jealous try hard for his
place,

'Tis Bachelor always is first in the race ;

He beats them for nose, and he beats them for pace.

*Hark forward to Bachelor ?
From daylight to dark !*

Where the fallows are dry, where manure has been
thrown,

With a storm in the air, with the ground like a
stone—

When we're all in a muddle, beat, baffled, and blown,
See ! Bachelor has it ! *Bill, let him alone.*

*Speak to it, Bachelor ;
Go hark to him ! Hark !*

That time in December—the best of our fun—
Not a mile from the gorse, ere we'd hardly begun,
Heading straight to the river—I thought we were done;
But 'twas Bachelor's courage that made it a run.

Yooi! over, Bachelor!

Yooi! over, old man!

As fierce as a torrent, as full as a tank,
That a hound ever crossed it, his stars he may thank!
While I watched how poor Benedict struggled and
sank!

There was Bachelor shaking his sides on the bank.

Forrard on, Bachelor!

Catch ye who can.

From the find to the finish, the whole blessed day,
How he cut out the work! How he showed us the
way!

When our fox doubled back where the fallow-deer lay,
How he stuck to the line, and turned short with his
prey!

Yo-Yooite, Bachelor!

Right, for a crown!

Though so handy to cast, and so patient to stoop,
When his bristles are up you may swear it's who-
whoop!

For he'll dash at his fox like a hawk in her swoop,
And he carries the head, marching home to his soup!

Sess! Sess! Bachelor!

Lap and lie down.

A CAVALIER'S SONG

FROM "HOLMBY HOUSE"

Ho ! fill me a flagon, as deep as you please,
Ho ! pledge me the health that we quaff on our knees ;
And the knave who refuses to drink till he fall,
Why the hangman shall crop him—ears, love-locks,
and all,

Then a halter we'll string,
And the rebel shall swing,
For the gallants of England are up for the King !

Ho ! saddle my horses as quick as you may,
The sorrel, the black, and the white-footed bay ;
The troop shall be mustered, the trumpet shall peal,
And the Roundhead shall taste of a Cavalier's steel.

For the little birds sing,
There are hawks on the wing
When the gallants of England are up for the King !

Ho ! fling me my beaver, and toss me the glove
That but yesterday clung to the hand of my love ;

To be bound on my crest—to be borne in the van,
And the rebel that reaps it must fight like a man!
 For the sabre shall swing,
 And the head-pieces ring,
When the gallants of England strike home for the
 King!

Ho! crush me a cup to the queen of my heart!
Ho! fill me a brimmer, the last ere we part,
A health to Prince Rupert! Success and renown!
To the dogs with the Commons! and up with the
 Crown!

 Then the stirrup-cup bring,
 Quaff it round in a ring!
To your horses! and ride to the death for the King!

“THE MONKS THAT LIVE UNDER
THE HILL”

WOULD it lighten your conscience, sweet Leicester-
shire maid,

To be shriven, though guiltless of ill?
There's a snug little priory lurks in the glade,
Like a nest in a meadow, and don't be afraid.
For remorseful young ladies are quite in the trade
Of the Monks that live under the hill.

'Tis a brotherhood zealous and pious, no doubt,
And their duties they seem to fulfil,
By creating a good deal of racket and rout,
By despising repose and ignoring the gout,
And by keeping the steam up within and without:
These Monks that live under the hill.

They are seldom in bed before Matins or Prime,
Though they often rise early for drill;
But at luncheon a “Pick-me-up” brings them to time,
Till their Vespers ring out with the dinner-bell's
chime;
And by Complines, the form becomes truly sublime,
Of these Monks that live under the hill.

They are given to dancing in London, men say,
And to flirting I'm told, with a will;
But in Leicestershire trifling like this wouldn't pay,
Where the business of life is to hunt every day,
And the nights must take care of themselves as they
may,
With the Monks that live under the hill.

So their riding is reckless, their courage is high,
And regardless of cropper or spill,
Their "oxers" they rattle,—their "raspers" they fly,
At the widest of water they *will* have a shy;
And while horses can wag, it is "Never say die!"
With these Monks that live under the hill.

Till at even-song homeward like rooks they repair,
When they've ended the day with a kill,
And they'll chant you some canticles, racy and rare,
And they'll tell you some tales would make many men
stare,
And they'll bid you to dine on the daintiest fare,
Will these Monks that live under the hill.

Then the Prior will press you to taste of his best,
Of the sweet, and the dry, and the still;
While the jolly Sacristan will pass you his jest,
And the Father Confessor will fill for the guest,
And you'll vow such a life is a life of the blest,
With these Monks that live under the hill.

Then long may it be so ! and long may they thrive !

Uncaptured by feminine skill,
For the bachelor-bees have the best of the hive,
And our Priory-priests are too precious to wive ;
And the pick of the choicest companions alive
Are the Monks that live under the hill.

AN ANGEL IN THE WAY

FAIR the downward path is spread,
Love and light thy coming greet;
Fruit is blushing o'er thy head,
Flowers are springing 'neath thy feet;
Mirth and sin, with tossing hands,
Wave thee on, a willing prey;
Yet an instant pause—there stands
An angel in the way.

Heed the heavenly warning, know
Fairest flowers the feet may trip;
Fruits, that like the sunset glow,
Turn to ashes on the lip.
Though the joys be wild and free,
Though the paths be pleasant, stay!
Even mortal eye can see
An angel in the way.

Wilt thou drown in worldly pleasure?
Wilt thou have, like him of old,

Length of days and store of treasure,
Wisdom, glory, power, and gold ?
Life and limb, shall sickness waste,
Want shall grind thee day by day,
Still to win thee, God hath placed
An angel in the way.

Trusting all on things that perish,
Shall a hopeless faith be thine ?
Earthly idol wilt thou cherish ?
Bow before an earthly shrine ?
Meet rebuke to mortal love
Yearning for a child of clay,
Death shall cross thy path and prove
An angel in the way.

When the prophet thought to sin,
Tempted by his heathen guide ;
When a prince's grace to win,
Prophet-lips would fain have lied,—
Even the brute the sage controlled
Found a human voice, to say
“ Master, smite me not—Behold
An angel in the way ! ”

So, when vice, to lure her slave,
Woos him down the shining track,
Spirit-hands are stretched to save,
Spirit-voices warn him back.

Heart of man ! to evil prone,
Chafe not at thy sin's delay ;
Bow thee humbly down, and own
An angel in the way.

From the "London Gazette."

VICTORIA CROSS. 7TH HUSSARS. MAJOR CHARLES CRAUFURD
FRASER.

"For conspicuous and cool gallantry on the 31st December, 1858, in having volunteered, at great personal risk, and under a sharp fire of musketry, to swim to the rescue of Captain Stisted and some men of the 7th Hussars, who were in imminent danger of being drowned in the river Raptée, while in pursuit of the rebels. Major Fraser succeeded in this gallant service, although at the time partially disabled, not having recovered from a severe wound received while leading a squadron in a charge against some Fanatics, in the action of Nawabgunge, on the 13th of June, 1858.

HOW HE WON THE SWIMMER'S GOLD MEDAL AND THE VICTORIA CROSS

GLEAMING eyes, and dusky faces ;
Brazen guns, depressed for slaughter ;
Track of blood in furrowed places,
There the jungle, here the water ;
Eager troop and opening section,
Crash of grape, and hiss of ball ;
Trumpets, at a chief's direction,
Sounding the Recall.

“ Turn again, we shall not heed them,
Gallant steed, so loyal and true ;
Others in the rear may lead them,
We have something yet to do.
Through the wounded, through the dying,
Clear the press and stem the rout :
In that stream a comrade's lying,
We must have him out ! ”

Chargers bold, and riders bolder,
None dare stem that torrent's force,
Breaking over girth and shoulder,
Sweeping downward man and horse.
In its bend the stream runs deeper ;
Foes about him, friends afar,
Sheltering where the bank is steeper,
Clings the maimed Hussar.

Off with buckle, belt, and sabre !
Heedless of a crippled limb,
Scorning peril, stripped for labour,
In he dashes, sink or swim ;
Now he's whirling round the eddy,
Now he battles in its roar,
Now with lengthened stroke, and steady,
Nears the other shore.

Dusky faces peering grimmer,
Fiery flashes from the wood,

Watery flashes round the swimmer
Where the bullet rips the flood ;
Now to reach him, foothold gaining !
Now to drag him safely back,
Through an angry volley, raining
Death along the track !

Dusky faces blankly staring
On a prey thus lost and won ;
Muttered curses, fiercely swearing,
“ Allah ! Allah ! bravely done ! ”
While the hero, like a galley
Nobly freighted, stems the tide ;
While a score of troopers rally
On the hither side.

Tramp of horse and death-shot pealing,
Wolfish howl, and British cheer,
Cannot drown the whisper, stealing
Grateful on the rescuer's ear.
“ Wounded, helpless, sick, dismounted,
Charlie Fraser, well I knew,
Come the worst, I might have counted
Faithfully on you ! ”

Thus the double danger spurned he,
Bold to slay and bold to save ;
Thus the meed of honour earned he,
Doubled for the doubly brave.

Badge of succour, badge of daring,
Gold and bronze, by which 'tis dross,
Next the swimmer's medal, wearing
His Victoria Cross !

“BOOTS AND SADDLES”

The ring of a bridle, the stamp of a hoof,
Stars above, and a wind in the tree ;
A bush for a billet, a rock for a roof,—
Outpost duty's the duty for me !
Listen ! a stir in the valley below,
The valley below is with riflemen crammed,
Covering the column, and watching the foe ;
Trumpet-major ! sound and be d—d !
Stand to your horses ! It's time to begin :
Boots and saddles ! the pickets are in !

Though our bivouac fire has smouldered away,
Yet a bit of good baccy can comfort us well ;
When you sleep in your cloak there's no lodging to
pay,
And where we shall breakfast the devil can tell.
But the horses were fed ere the daylight had gone ;
There's a slice in the embers, a drop in the can,
Take a suck at it, comrade, and so pass it on,
For a ration of brandy puts heart in a man.
Good liquor is scarce, and to waste it a sin :
Boots and saddles ! the pickets are in !

Hark ! there's a shot from the crest of the hill !

Look ! there's a rocket leaps high in the air !

By the beat of his gallop that's nearing us still,

That runaway horse has no rider, I'll swear !

There's a jolly Light Infantry post on the right,

I hear their bugles, they sound the advance ;

Faith ! they'll tip us a tune that shall wake up the
night,

And we're hardly the lads to leave out of the dance.

They're at it already, I hear by the din :

Boots and saddles ! the pickets are in !

They don't give us long our divisions to prove ;

Short, sharp, and distinct comes the word of
command,

“ Have your men in the saddle ! be ready to move.

Keep the squadron together, the horses in hand ! ”

While a whisper's caught up through the ranks as
they form,

A whisper that fain would break out in a cheer,
How the foe is in force, how the work will be warm ;

But steady ! the chief gallops up from the rear.

With old “ Death or glory ” to fight is to win,

And the colonel means mischief, I know by his grin.

Boots and saddles ! the pickets are in !

Boots and saddles ! the pickets are in !

THE FAIRIES' SPRING

THEY have stolen the child from his father's hand,
He is missed from his mother's knee ;
They have borne him away to their elfin land
To ride in the van of a fairy band,
For a babe of the cross was he ;
Fond father, meek mother, ye seek him in vain,
Ye never shall look on your darling again.

To the mountain-side where the flowers grew wild,
He would wander forth to play ;
And the fairies had seen that winsome child,
With his golden curls and blue eyes mild,
And simple childish way ;
So the elf-king caught him, " Come hither," said he,
" Come ride to the land of the fairies with me ! "

He thought not once of his mother's woe !
He forgot his father's home,
For they brought him a steed like the driven snow,
And he smiled as they led him down below,
Through middle earth to roam ;

And they showed him their treasure of jewels and
gold,
And they welcomed the boy, for they loved him of old.

But the child soon pined for his mother's care,
He pined for the light of day,
He pined for the freshness of upper air,
His blue eye ached with the blinding glare
Of their cavern's magic ray ;
For the sign of the cross had been pressed on his
brow,
And he might not be thrall to the fairy folk now.

But few that have lived with the elfin race
May visit this earth again ;
No more shall he smile in his mother's face,
For his spirit hath flown to its heavenly place,
With the fairies it might not remain ;
Though deeply they loved him, and hopeless and
wild
Was the elfins' grief for the Christian child.

They buried him down in a cavern lone,
Deep, deep in the mountain's womb,
And their tears welled up through the hard grey
stone,
To the turf above, as they made their moan
O'er the infant's early tomb ;
And sweet to the thirsting lips of men
Is the spring of tears in the fairies' glen.

“POT-POURRI”

I SPIED a sweet moss-rose my garden adorning,
With a blush at her core like the pink of a shell,
And I wrung from her petals the dew-drop of morning,
And gathered her gently and tended her well ;
For the bee and the butterfly round her were humming,
To whisper their flattering love-tale and fly,
And too surely I knew that the season was coming
When the flower must fade and the insect must die.

So deep in the shade of my chamber I brought her,
And sheltered her safe from the wind and the sun,
And cared for her kindly, and dipped her in water,
And vowed to preserve her when summer was done.
Though dark was my dwelling, this darling of Flora,
This spirit of beauty enlivened the gloom :
Was it strange, was it wrong, I should love and adore her ?
Should bathe in her fragrance and bask in her bloom ?

But long ere the brightness of summer was shaded,
My moss-rose was drooping and withering away ;
Her perfume had perished, her freshness had faded,
The very condition of life is decay.
And now more than ever I cherish and prize her,
For love shall not falter, though beauty depart :
And dearer to me that the others despise her,
My moss-rose is lying crushed home to my heart.

CHASTELÂR

As an upland bare and sere
In the waning of the year,
When the golden drops are withered off the broom ;
As a picture when the pride
Of its colouring hath died,
And faded like a phantom into gloom ;

As a night without a star,
Or a ship without a spar,
Or a mist that broods and gathers on the sea :
As a court without a throne,
Or a ring without a stone,
Seems the widowed land of France, bereft of thee !

Our darling pearl and pride,
Our blossom and our bride,
Wilt thou never gladden eyes of ours again ?
Would the waves might rise and drown
Barren Scotland and her crown,
So thou wert back with us in fair Touraine !

CHASTELÂR

WHAT need have we of beacon sheen
To warn us or to save,
With the star-bright eyes of our lovely queen
Guiding us o'er the wave?

What need have we of a following tide,
What need of a smiling sky?
'Tis sunshine ever at Mary's side,
And summer when she is by.

Her glances, like the day-god's light,
On each and all are thrown;
Like him she shines, impartial, bright,
Unrivalled, and alone.

Alone! alone! an ice-queen's lot,
Though dazzling on a throne;
Ah! better to love in the lowliest cot
Than pine in a palace, alone.

CHASTELÂR

THE brightest gems in heaven that glow
Shine out from midmost sky ;
The whitest pearls of the sea below
In its lowest caverns lie.
He must stretch afar who would reach a star,
Dive deep for the pearl, I trow ;
And the fairest rose that in Scotland blows
Hangs high on the topmost bough.

The stream of the strath runs broad and strong,
But sweeter the mountain-rill ;
And those who would drink with the fairy throng
Must climb to the crest of the hill.
For the moonlit ring of the elfin-king
Is danced on the steepest knowe,
And the bonniest rose that in Scotland blows
Hangs high on the topmost bough.

The violet peeps from its sheltering brake,
The lily lies low in the lea,

While the bloom is on ye may touch and take,
For the humble are frank and free ;
But the garden's pride wears a thorn at her side,
It has pricked to the bone ere now ;
And the noblest rose that in Scotland blows
Hangs high on the topmost bough.

'Twere a glorious game to have bartered all
For the bonniest branch in the bower,
And a man might well be content to fall
In a leap for its queenliest flower.
To win her indeed were too princely a meed,
To serve her is guerdon enow,
And the loveliest rose that in Scotland blows
Hangs high on the topmost bough.

THE MAIDEN'S VOW

A WOMAN may better her word, I trow ;
Now lithe and listen, my lords, to me,
And I'll tell ye the tale of the Maiden's Vow,
And the roses that bloomed on the bonny rose-tree.

The queen of the cluster, beyond compare,
Aloft in the pride of her majesty hung ;
Bright and beautiful, fresh and fair,
The bevy of blossoms around her clung.

So the winds came wooing from east and west,
Wooing and whispering frank and free ;
But she folded her petals, quoth she, " I am best
On a stalk of my own, at the top of the tree."

And they folded their petals, the rosebuds too,
And closer they clung as the wind swept by ;
For they vowed a vow, that sisterhood true,
Together to fade, and together to die.

“ Never a wind shall a rosebud wrest,
Never a gallant shall wile us away,
To wear in his bonnet, to wear on his breast,”
Rose and rosebuds answering, “ Nay.”

So staunch were the five to their word of mouth,
They baffled the suitors that thronged to the bower ;
Till a breeze came murmuring out of the south,
And stole home to the heart of the queenliest
flower.

So she bent her beauty to hear him sigh,
And ever the brighter and fairer she grew ;
What wonder then that each rosebud nigh
Should open its leaves to the breezes too ?

Oh gather the dew while the freshness is on,
Roses and maidens they fade in a day ;
Ere you’ve tasted the sweetness the morning is gone :
Love at your leisure, but wed while you may.

Winter is coming and time shall not spare ye,
Beautiful blossom, so fragrant and sheen ;
Joy to the gallants that win ye and wear ye,
Joy to the roses and joy to their queen !

FAREWELL

FAREWELL ! farewell ! How soon 'tis said !
The wind is off the bay,
The sweeps are out, the sail is spread,
The galley gathers way.

Farewell ! farewell ! The words are light !
Yet how can words say more ?
Sad hearts are on the sea to-night,
And sadder on the shore.

Farewell ! farewell ! Perhaps it screens
Thy triumph to be free ;
Farewell ! farewell ! Perhaps it means
An end of all for me.

THE FAIREST FLOWER

THE painted pinks are gay and glad,
The rose is blushing red,
The lady-lily, pale and sad,
Hangs meekly down her head;
A carpet rich in countless dyes,
Marred by a single blot,
For seeking still the flower I prize,
Meets but to mock my weary eyes,
The blank where she is not !

A golden insect hums aloft,
Nor pauses in its quest ;
A wind steals in, and whispers soft
Of summers in the west ;
They search the garden through and through,
They try each wealthy plot,
The bee to wed, the breeze to woo
That missing flower, and only sue
The blank where she is not !

And here and there, now low, now high,
In many a darting ring,
There shoots a shade across the sky,
The wild bird on the wing ;
The wild bird hurries to and fro
About each well-known spot,
That breathed her fragrance long ago,
That hath not kept one leaf to show
The blank where she is not !

I, too, must wander lonely round
An unfrequented bower,
And mourn through all the garden ground,
My early withered flower ;
My hopes that foundered, freight and bark,
My changed and cheerless lot ;
For still my life is cold and dark,
And still my heart is sad to mark
The blank where she is not !

RETRORSUM

THE dreary fen, from edge to edge,
Is barren, blank, and sere,
The hoar-frost stiffens in the sedge,
There's ice upon the mere ;
The woodcock in the moon-lit night
Comes flitting o'er the sea :
What is this phantom, pale and bright,
That walks with me ?

Her eyes are sad, her touch is chill,
Her voice is soft and low,
Her face is very fair, and still
Her face is vexed with woe.
She turns her head from side to side,
And ever looks she back,
Like one who seeks a missing guide,
Lost on the track.

She lays her quiet hand on mine,
It freezes to the bone ;

Quoth she, " I need no mark nor sign
To stamp thee for mine own ;
Through good and ill, by board and bed,
With me thy lot is cast,
Me hast thou loved, me didst thou wed ;
I am the Past !

" Fair is the Future's shadowy grace,
She flaunts a tempting prize,
And through the veil that dims her face
There's promise in her eyes ;
I fear her not—I court the strife ;
Poor rival must she be,
When all the best of all thy life
Is bound to me.

" The Present, like a lavish dame,
Invites thee to her arms,
And looks, and laughs, and bids thee claim
Her favour and her charms.
That breathing form in act to clasp,
Oh ! woman to the core !
She melts to nothing in thy grasp,—
A dream—no more.

" But I am faithful, real, and true,
From me thou shalt not part :
My wreath of rosemary and rue
I've wound about thy heart.

I fill thy being, sense, and brain ;
Mine, while thou drawest breath,
Mine, by the sacrament of pain,
Even in death !

“ Because in life thou didst refuse
To wince beneath the goad,
Because thy constancy could choose
The labour and the load ;
Because, like one who scorns defeat
And falls upon his sword,
Thou didst elect thy fate to meet,—
Have thy reward.

“ Accept the wages, count the cost,
The toil against the gain ;
Some bitter in the sweet is lost,
If love be twined with pain ;
If sorrow, like a summer-night,
Reflect with tender ray
The memory of a vanished light
That once was day.

“ Have thy reward ; I am thy mate,
Nor wouldst thou barter me
For all that Fancy could create,
For all that fact could be.
Hereafter in the eternal sphere,
Where endless ages roll,
Thine, by the bond that bound us here,
Bride of thy soul.

“ Did I not wring from out thy core
The dross of earthly leaven ?
Assign the task, and teach the lore
That finds a path to Heaven ;
Point where the gate of mercy stands
Beyond the narrow way,
And force thee down with loving hands
To kneel and pray ?

“ Beneath that moonshine calm and cold,
Look outward o’er the sea ;
Where shoots a trailing star, behold
Thy progress but for me !
An upward flash, a feeble light,
A fleeting, flickering spark,
A little gleam, a downward flight,
Lost in the dark !

“ Quenched by a false and godless glare,
I nursed the sacred flame,
Cleansed it with penitence and prayer
From taint of sin and shame.
Thus perfect, purified, and bright,
This marriage-torch shall cheer
Our watches through the lingering night,
Till dawn appear.

“ Then call me by what name thou wilt,
Remembrance or Regret,
Repentance, or Remorse for guilt,
But clasp me closer yet.

Mine is the staff thy steps to stay,
The hand to hold thee fast,
And mine the lamp that lights the way
To Heaven at last."

“NUNC EST BIBENDUM ”

THE times and the seasons have perished,
The years have flown over my head ;
The friends that I honoured and cherished,
By scores have gone down to the Dead.
With faces now brighter, now dimmer,
Like shadows they waver and pass,
While Memory fills them a brimmer,
And I see them again in my glass !

But where is the youth I remember,
Confiding, untainted, and free ?
In a June so unlike my December
'Tis strange to accept him for *me* !
A picture Time could not but tarnish,
Its colours are faded, alas !
Till Wine, like a coating of varnish,
Restores them again in the glass !

And where are the pleasures I followed ?
The chase in its sylvan abode,

The hounds that I hunted and holloaed,
The horses I stabled and rode ?
Has he vanished—the favourite that bore me,
To sail on an ocean of grass ?
No ; he's standing there saddled before me.
I see him again in my glass !

Have I done with the hope and the rapture,
The whisper that stole to my heart,
The hour of confession and capture,
The moment to kiss and to part ?
Is she gone to the land of To-morrow,
That loving and true-hearted lass ?
Oh ! precious indeed, in their sorrow,
Are the tears that drop into my glass !

Yet how fair was the promise of Morning !
And noon in its lustre, how bright !
Now darkness is falling, and warning
My soul of the coming of Night.
There is nothing that Autumn can offer,
The blossoms of Spring to surpass,
And I challenge the sneer of the scoffer,
While I dip a dead flower in my glass !

'Tis done ; and old Time is the winner,
I held him a race to the last !
But the sand dribbles thinner and thinner,
The notches all count for the past.

What matter? Fresh players shall follow,
Fresh scores in their turn to amass;
And were this my last bumper to swallow,
I'd drink them "Good Luck" in the glass!

LIKE TO LIKE

I PASS'D without the city gate,
I linger'd by the way ;
The palm was bending to her mate,
And thus I heard her say,

“ The arrow to the quiver,
And the wild bird to the tree ;
The stream to meet the river,
And the river to the sea.
The waves are wedded on the beach,
The shadows on the lea ;
And like to like, and each to each,
And I to thee.

“ The cedar on the mountain,
And the bramble in the brake ;
The willow by the fountain,
And the lily on the lake ;
The serpent coiling in its lair,
The eagle soaring free,
Draw kin to kin, and pair to pair,
And I to thee.

" For everything created
 In the bounds of earth and sky,
 Hath such longing to be mated,
 It must couple, or must die.
 The wind of heaven beguiles the leaf,
 The rose invites the bee ;
 The sickle hugs the barley-sheaf,
 And I love thee.
 By night and day, in joy and grief,
 Do thou love me ? "

The palm was bending to her mate,
 I marked her meaning well ;
 And pass'd within the city gate,
 The fond old tale to tell.

A LULLABY

SLEEP, my love, sleep ; rest, my love, rest ;
Dieth the moan of the wind in the tree,
Foldeth her pinions the bird in her nest,
Sinketh the sun to his bed in the sea.
Sleep, sleep—lull'd on my breast,
Tossing and troubled, and thinking of me.

Hush, my love, hush ; with petals that close,
Bowling and bending their heads to the lea,
Fainteth the lily, and fadeth the rose,
Sighing and sad for desire of the bee.
Hush, hush ; drooping like those,
Weary of waking and watching for me.

Peace, my love, peace ; falleth the night,
Veiling in shadows her glory for thee ;
Eyes may be darken'd, while visions are bright,
Senses be fettered, though fancy is free.
Peace, peace ; slumbering light,
Longing and loving and dreaming of me.

AN INCANTATION

By the power of the Seven
Great tokens of light ;
By the Judges of Heaven,
The watchers of night ;
By the might of those forces
That govern on high,
The Stars in their courses,
The hosts of the sky ;
By Ashur, grim pagan
Our father in mail ;
By Nebo and Dagon,
By Nisroch and Baal :
By pale Ishtar, contrasting
With red Merodach,
By the wings everlasting,
I summon thee back !

From the ranks of a legion
That files through the gloom
Of a shadowy region
Disclosed by the tomb ;

From the gulf of black sorrow
Of silence and sleep,
Where a night with no morrow
Broods over the deep ;
By desire unavailing,
And pleasure that's fled ;
By the living bewailing
Her love for the dead ;
By the wish that endears thee,
The kisses that burn,
And the passion that sears thee,
I bid thee return !

Thou art cold, and thy face is
So waxen at rest,
In my fiery embraces
Seek warmth on my breast,
Through the lips that caress thee
Draw balm in my breath,
And the arms that compress thee
Shall wrench thee from Death.
Though he boasteth to spare not,
For ransom or fee,
Yet he shall not, he dare not,
Take tribute of me.
Then if love can restore thee,
Though bound on the track,
From the journey before thee,
Beloved, come back !

OVER THE WATER

I STAND on the brink of the river,
The river that runs to the sea,
The fears of a maid—I forgive her,
And bid her come over to me ;
She knows that her lover is waiting,
She's longing his darling to be,
And Spring is the season of mating,
But—she dare not come over to thee !

I have jewels and gold without measure,
I have mountain and meadow and lea,
I have stores of possessions and treasure,
All wasting and spoiling for thee.
Her heart is well worthy the winning,
But love is a gift of the free,
And she vowed, from the very beginning,
She'd never come over to thee.

Then lonely I'll wed with my sorrow—
Dead branch on a desolate tree—

My night hath no hope of a morrow
Unless she come over to me.
Love takes no denial, and pity
Is love in the second degree,
So long ere I'd ended my ditty,
The maiden came over to me !

“YES—I LIKE YOU”

WHEN I meet you, can I greet you
With a haughty little stare?
Scarcely glancing where you're prancing
By me on the chestnut mare;
Still dissembling, though I'm trembling,
Thus, you know, we're trained and taught.
For I like you—doesn't it strike you?
Like you more than perhaps I ought.
For I like you, &c.

When I meet you, must I treat you
As a stranger, calm and cold?
Softer feeling, half revealing—
Are you *waiting* to be told?
D' you suppose, Sir, that a rose, Sir,
Picks *itself* to reach your breast?
And I like you—doesn't it strike you?
Like you more than all the rest.
Yes, I like you, &c.

When I meet you, I could eat you ;
Dining with my Uncle John,
Sitting next you, so perplexed, you
Ought to know my heart is gone.
While I'm choking, 'tis provoking,
You can munch and talk and drink.
Though I like you—doesn't it strike you ?
Like you more than you may think.
Yes, I like you, &c.

When I meet you, I could beat you
For your solemn face and glum ;
Don't you see, Sir, *you* are free, Sir,
I have all the worst to come,—
Mother's warning, sister's scorning,
Qualms of prudence, pride, and pelf.
Oh ! I like you—doesn't it strike you ?
Like you more than life itself.
Yes, I like you, &c.

SO FAR AWAY

FADED flowers fondly cherished,
 Dearer for decay,
Emblems of the hope that perished
 In a summer's day,
All the path behind me strewing
Mark the track of Life's undoing,
Memories of a Past renewing,
 So far away!

Sunset glory sadly hiding
 In a shroud of grey,
Forest whispers sadly chiding
 Forest streams at play;
Airy voices pleading, sighing,
Airy voice to voice replying,
Mourn because our dead are lying
 So far away.

Yet above us, lustre streaming
 From its silver ray,
See the Star of Mercy beaming
 Softly on our way,—

Vain regrets of earth abating,
Holy hope of heaven creating,
Where the loved and lost are waiting,
 So far away.

A DREAM

I KNELT by the grave where my darling was sleeping,
Cold in its little bed under the stone,
And I prayed that the angels might have it in keeping,
For the child was in heaven, though I was alone.

Bowed in the dust with my burden of sorrow,
Hope had departed, and comfort had fled,
Dreary the vigil and distant the morrow,
And dark is the hour when we watch by the dead.

Yet deep in my heart came a longing unspoken,
For Infinite Mercy to grant me my prayer,
And yield to the poor stricken mourner a token
That He who had taken would hold in His care.

Then round me there grew a great light that was
rather
The glory of God than the lustre of day,
And an angel came down from the face of his Father,
And poised o'er the spot where my little one lay.

Too soon he departed, but left me the power
To gaze on his track when the vision had flown,
And behold in its beauty, fresh gathered, a flower
From the gardens of heaven lay fair on the stone.

“ THE PLACE WHERE THE OLD HORSE
DIED ”

IN the hollow, by the pollard, where the crop is tall
and rank
Of the dock-leaf and the nettle growing free,
Where the bramble and the brushwood straggle
blindly o'er the bank,
And the pyat jerks and chatters on the tree,
There's a fence I never pass
In the sedges and the grass,
But for very shame I turn my head aside,
While the tears come thick and hot,
And my curse is on the spot—
'Tis the place where the old horse died.

There's his hoof upon the chimney, there's his hide
upon the chair,
A better never bent him to the rein ;
Now, for all my love and care, I've an empty stall
and bare ;
I shall never ride my gallant horse again !
How he laid him out at speed,
How he loved to have a lead,

How he snorted in his mettle and his pride !

Not a flyer of the Hunt

Was beside him in the front,

At the place where the old horse died !

Was he blown ? I hardly think it. Did he slip ?

I cannot tell.

We had run for forty minutes in the vale,

He was reaching at his bridle ; he was going strong
and well,

And he never seemed to falter or to fail ;

Though I sometimes fancy, too,

That his daring spirit knew

The task beyond the compass of his stride,

Yet he faced it true and brave,

And dropped into his grave

At the place where the old horse died.

I was up in half a minute, but he never seemed to
stir,

Though I scored him with my rowels in the fall ;

In his life he had not felt before the insult of the
spur,

And I knew that it was over, once for all.

When motionless he lay

In his cheerless bed of clay,

Huddled up without an effort on his side—

'Twas a hard and bitter stroke,

For his honest back was broke,

At the place where the old horse died.

With a neigh so faint and feeble that it touched me
like a groan,

"Farewell," he seemed to murmur, "ere I die ;"
Then set his teeth and stretched his limbs, and so I
stood alone,

While the merry chase went heedless sweeping by.

Am I womanly and weak

If the tear was on my cheek

For a brotherhood that death could thus divide ?

If sickened and amazed

Through a woful mist I gazed

On the place where the old horse died ?

There are men both good and wise who hold that in a
future state

Dumb creatures we have cherished here below
Shall give us joyous greeting when we pass the golden
gate ;

Is it folly that I hope it may be so ?

For never man had friend

More enduring to the end,

Truer mate in every turn of time and tide.

Could I think we'd meet again

It would lighten half my pain

At the place where the old horse died.

TALLY-HO !

THERE are soul-stirring chords in the fiddle and flute
When dancing begins in the hall,
And a goddess in muslin, that's likely to suit,
Is the mate of your choice for the ball ;
But the player may strain every finger in vain,
And the fiddler may rosin his bow,
Nor flourish nor string such a rapture shall bring,
As the music of sweet Tally-Ho !

There's a melody, too, in the whispering trees
When day has gone down in the West,
And a lullaby soft in the sigh of the breeze
That hushes the woods to their rest ;
There are madrigals fair in the voices of air,
In the stream with its ripple and flow,
But a merrier tune shall delight us at noon,
In the music of sweet Tally-Ho !

When autumn is flaunting his banner of pride
For glory that summer has fled,

Arrayed in the robes of his royalty, dyed
In tawny and orange and red ;
When the oak is yet rife with the vigour of life,
Though his acorns are dropping below,
Through bramble and brake shall the echoes awake,
To the ring of a clear Tally-Ho !

“ A fox, for a hundred ! ” they know it, the pack,
Old Chorister always speaks true,
And the Whip from his corner is told to come back,
And forbid to go on for a view.
Now the varmint is spied, as he crosses the ride,
A tough old campaigner I trow—
Long, limber, and grey, see him stealing away
—Half a minute !—and then—Tally-Ho !

Mark Fanciful standing, all eye and all ear,
One second, ere, wild for the fun,
She is lashing along with the pace of a deer,
Her comrades to join in the run.
Your saddle you grip, gather bridle and whip,
Give your hunter the office to go,
In his rush through the air little breath is to spare
For the cheer of your wild Tally-Ho !

At the end of the wood the old farmer in brown,
On the back of his good little mare,
Shows a grin of delight and a jolly bald crown,
As he holds up his hat in the air ;

Though at heart he's as keen as if youth were still
green,

Yet (a secret all sportsmen should know)
Not a word will he say till the fox is away,
Then he gives you a real Tally-Ho!

There's a scent, you may swear, by the pace that they
drive,

You must tackle to work with a will,
For as sure as you stand in your stirrups alive

It's a case of a run and a kill!
So I wish you good speed, a good line, and a lead,
With the luck of each fence where it's low,
Not the last of the troop, may you hear the Who-
whoop,
Well pleased as you heard Tally-Ho!

“BROW, BAY AND TRAY”

(A SONG OF WEST SOMERSET)

FIRST came the Harboured,
The Harboured, the Harboured—
First came the Harboured,

Before the dawn was clear ;
And here he stooped, and there he stood,
And round the combe he made it good,
And harboured in the Lower Wood,
A warrantable deer !

Some twenty score, he said, and more
The noble beast would weigh,
For he'd brow, bay and tray, my lads—
Brow, bay and tray !

(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him who leads the Hunt,
With “ Tally-ho ! Away ! ”
And brow, bay and tray, my lads—
Brow, bay and tray !

Next came the Tufters,
The Tufters, the Tufters—

Next came the Tufters,
 Tufting through the brake,
And opened on him, staunch and sure,
And moved him, where he couched secure,
And drove him forward o'er the moor
 His gallant point to make.
While on his track the zealous pack
 We did our best to lay ;
For he'd brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !
(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Huntsman,
 The Huntsman, the Huntsman—
Next came the Huntsman
 His jolly horn to wind,
With Finisher, and Foreman too,
And Nelson, who had got a view,
And many a comrade, bold and true,
 That bustled round the find,
“ Have at him ! see, the slot ! ” quoth he
 (“ Hold up, my gallant grey ! ”)
He has brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !
(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Master,
 The Master, the Master—
Next came the Master,
 He seemed a merry man ;



“From point to point the parson flew.”

His spur was in the chestnut's side—
 "Hark forward ! hark !" the Master cried ;
 " My friends, I'll give you leave to ride
 And catch them if you can !
 Before the fun is fairly done,
 You'll falter by the way ;
 For he's brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray ! "

(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Parson,
 The Parson, the Parson—
 Next came the Parson,
 His shortest way to seek,
 And like a phantom lost to view,
 From point to point the Parson flew—
 The parish, at a pinch, could do
 Without him for a week !
 " But see the kill I must, and will, "
 Said he, " this blessed day. "
 For he's brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !

(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Farmers
 The Farmers, the Farmers—
 Next came the Farmers,
 The keenest blades I know !
 They pierce the copse's leafy gloom,
 They climb the hill and thread the combe,

Or skim the bog for standing-room,
But never fail to go.
By hook or crook they'll have a look,
I'll undertake to say,
At his brow, bay and tray, my lads—
Brow, bay and tray!
(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Moor-land,
The Moor-land, the Moor-land—
Next came the Moor-land,
It stretched for many a mile:
The spurs were plied without avail,
The best of steeds were seen to fail,
The very hounds began to tail,
And ran in lengthened file—
Yet forward still, he sank the hill,
To finish out the play,
With his brow, bay and tray, my lads—
Brow, bay and tray!
(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the River-side,
The River-side, the River-side—
Next came the River-side
('Twas brawling to the brim)
Undaunted in the whirling flood,
To face his foes the champion stood,
While, all about him wild for blood,
They clamoured, sink or swim;

For weary feet at Watersmeet*
 Had set him up to bay,
 With his brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !
 (*Chorus.*) Then here's to him, &c.

Next came the Death-stroke,
 The Death-stroke, the Death-stroke—
 Next came the Death-stroke,
 The huntsman drove it home.
 While here and there, from far and near,
 With laugh and shout, and thrilling cheer,
 We gathered round the dying deer,
 Beside the torrent's foam ;
 Till stark and dead, with crown on head,
 The fallen monarch lay,
 With his brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !

(*Chorus.*) Then here's to him who led the Hunt—
 Whom death alone could stop,
 With his brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 And four upon the top !
 With nine times nine for every tine
 He flourished in the fray,
 And brow, bay and tray, my lads—
 Brow, bay and tray !

* The confluence of Badgeworthy water and the river Lynn.

WARE WIRE !

(A PROTEST)

Good fellows, and sportsmen of every degree,
Who live by the land, will you listen to me ?
To teach you your business I offer no claim,
But the man who looks on sees a deal of the game.
And your thrift while I honour, your acres admire,
I think you're mistaken to fence them with Wire !

Let us argue the point : If the stock get astray,
If the pig in a panic sets off for the day,
If a herd leaves unfolded, lamb, heifer, or steer,
If the colt from his tackle can kick himself clear,
Your truants to capture you'll hardly desire
That their hides should be torn into ribbons with
Wire !

For see ! The black bullock halts, shivers, and reels,
The handsome prize heifer is fast by his heels,

Entangled the wether, and mangled the ewe,
The pig becomes pork, as he chokes, pushing
through,
And the horse at two hundred, to carry the Squire,
Is blemished for life while he hangs on the Wire!

Moreover—and here the shoe pinches, I know!—
You love to ride hunting, and most of you *go*.
When thickest the fences and quickest the burst,
'Tis a thousand to one that a farmer is first.
But I give you my honour, it makes me perspire,
To think of my neighbour turned over by Wire!

You may bore through the blackthorn, and top the
oak-rail,
Here courage shall serve, and there craft can avail.
The seasoned old horse does his timber with ease;
The young ones jump water as wide as you please;
But the wisdom of age, and the four-year-old's fire,
Are helpless alike if you ride them at Wire!

Great heavens! rash man, what a crowner you
come!
Your collar-bone broken, two ribs, and a thumb;
While the pride of your stable lies stretched on the
plain,
And the friend of your heart never rises again;
Then bitter the curses you launch, in your ire,
At the villain who fenced his enclosure with Wire!

'Tis cruel to see, in the cream of a run,
A dozen fine fellows enjoying the fun,
Struck down at a moment to writhe in the dirt,
Dismounted, disgusted, both frightened *and* hurt !
While behind them a panic breaks out like a fire,
With the ominous caution—" *Ware Wire, sir ! Ware Wire !* "

No ! twist us your binders as strong as you will,
We must all take our chances of cropper and spill ;
There are scores of young ashes to stiffen the gaps,
And a blind double ditch is the surest of traps.
But remember, fair sportsmen fair usage require ;
So Up with the timber, and Down with the Wire !

THE KING OF THE WEST

*(Dedicated to M. F. BISSET, Esq., Master of Devon
and Somerset Staghouuds)*

CAPTAIN and leader, and lord of the herd,
Bold and alert when his mettle is stirred—
Lithe as a lion, and light as a bird,
 Royal in crest,
Dashing the dew from his frontlet and head,
Pillowed on purple and russet and red,
Rises in state from his heathery bed,
 The King of the West.

Stands for a second erect in his pride,
Listens before and behind and aside
To the tongue of the tufters that gallantly chide,
 Staunch on the quest ;
While louder and deeper the challenge resounds,
Till it rings through the combe in a chorus of hounds,
And the music of death with its echo surrounds
 The King of the West.

Like a storm-driven cloud, like a hawk on the wing,
Like a shaft from a bow, like a stone from a sling,
How he shoots over bracken and boulder and ling—

They may gallop their best !

But the horse and his rider shall labour and strain,
The rowel be reddened, and tightened the rein ;
And the staghound shall droop ere a furlong he gain
On the King of the West !

From acre to acre the moorland is spread,
And acre by acre fleets under his tread,
Untiring and swift, as he stretches ahead,
For life to contest.

By the ridge of the mountain, the copse on its side,
By tors where they glisten, and streams where they
glide,
The swamp that can swallow, the wood that can hide
The King of the West.

For the yell of their war-cry is borne on the wind,
And the ruthless pursuers are raging behind :
He must scour his dominions a refuge to find—

Nor fail in the test,

Though before him the bounds of his monarchy lie,
Where the blue of the sea meets the blue of the sky,
And above him the raven is hungering on high—
For the King of the West.

Where a rent in the precipice yawns on the deep,
Unfaltering—undaunted—he makes for the steep ;

With antlers flung back gathers breath for the leap,
 To extremity pressed ;
And launched from the brink of it, fenceless and bare,
The fate of each element eager to dare,
He cleaves through the wave, as he clove through the
 air—

 This King of the West.

Low down on the waters the sunset hath spread,
From sky-line to shingle a pathway of red,
Like a curtain of blood, to close over his head,
 Where he sinks to his rest,
Pursuit and pursuers, outpaced and surpassed,
And about him a mantle of royalty cast,
He dies, undefeated, and game to the last—
 The King of the West.

A LAY OF THE RANSTON BLOODHOUNDS

(Dedicated to LORD WOLVERTON)

THE leaf is dead, the woods are red,
Autumn skies are soft and pale,
Winds are through the copses straying,
Ripples on the water playing.
Hark ! I hear the bloodhound baying,
Down by the river in the vale !

Pacing o'er the slopes of Chettel,
Ere the sun was high,
Many a hunter, full of mettle,
Trotted gaily by ;
Many a rider, free and gallant,
Chafing to begin,
All the talk and all the talent,
Met at Cashmoor Inn.
Still and silent, not a holloa
Telling where 'twas gone ;

Faster than the breeze could follow,
Flew the red-deer on.
Warily, of coming danger
Noted every sign,
Marking Friendly, Viceroy, Ranger
Open on the line.
For leaves are dead, and woods are red,
Autumn skies, &c.

How the chorus pealed and gathered
To an organ's tone !
How the horses steamed and lathered
But to hold their own !
Like a burst of angry weather
In the tempest's frown,
How the pack, at head together,
Swept across the down !
Not the lightest fence confined them ;
Racing fair and fast,
Many a mile they left behind them,
Ere the plain was past.
Then into the vale defiling,
Drew the lengthened Hunt ;
And the good ones, grimly smiling,
Settled in the front.
Leaves are dead, and woods are red, &c.

Field by field came grief and trouble,
Thicker grew the plot ;
Stubborn rail and ugly double
Weeded out the lot.

Here the horse, and there his master !—

Where they fell they lay—

Faster ran the hounds and faster,

Further seemed the prey ;

Till at last a check compelled them

In his face to look.

Forward then his Lordship held them,

Right across the brook ;

Rose again the joyous rally,

Clamoured louder still,

Woke the hamlet in the valley,

Echoed round the hill !

Leaves are dead, and woods are red, &c.

Pleasure that the most enchants us,

Seems the soonest done ;

What is life with all it grants us,

But a hunting run !

Necks were stretched, and mouths were deadened,

Wind began to fail ;

Sobbing sides and rowels reddened,

Told the usual tale.

Long before the chase was finished—

Ridden fairly through,

How that gallant field diminished—

To a chosen few !

Fain would I relate their glory.

Name each favourite mount :

But your bard who tells the story,

Wasn't there to count !

Leaves are dead, and woods are red, &c.

Fill your glasses ! All good fellows,
Lovers of a burst ;

Sportsmen safe or riders jealous,
Bruising to be first.

Never spare it ! Let the donor
Drain his cellars' wealth !

Here's the pack ! and here's the owner !
Here's his Lordship's health !

Surely now with each November,
In the yearly rounds,

Ranston shall we all remember,
And the deep-mouthed hounds ;

How they pressed, how none forsook it,
Through that brilliant hour !

How they ran their deer and took it
By the flooded Stour !

For leaves are dead, and woods are red, &c.

GIPSY JOHN

(*From* "BLACK BUT COMELY")

THE gipsy fires are shining,
The kettle sings a song,
And stomachs want their lining
That are empty all day long.
Then welcome if you've lost your way,
For daylight's past and gone,
And strangers might do worse than stay
To house with Gipsy John !

So dip your fingers in the stew,
And drink a cup to me ;
I'll fill again, and drink to you
A health in Romany !

I hope you'll like your dinner—
But it's not polite to brag—
And as I'm a living sinner,
It has cost me not a mag !

That loaf is off the bailiff's board,
A rich cur-mud-ge-on ;
The rest comes mostly from my lord,
Purloined by Gipsy John !

Then dip your fingers, &c.

There's fowl of many a feather,
There's a turkey-poult and hen,
A moorcock off the heather,
A mallard from the fen,
A leash of teal, a thumping goose,
As heavy as a swan ;
He ought to wear his waistcoat loose
Who dines with Gipsy John !

Then dip your fingers, &c.

And when your brains are turning,
And you're only fit for bed,
Those lamps in heaven are burning
To light you overhead :
Till waking up, refreshed and bright,
When stars grow pale and wan,
You'll swear they pass a cosy night
Who lodge with Gipsy John !

Then dip your fingers, &c,

The birds in the air shall call you,
They are stirring with the day,

No mischief shall befall you
Till we've set you on your way ;
And when you've left the wanderers' camp
To travel blithely on,
Be kind to some poor tinker-tramp,
And think of Gipsy John !
Then dip your fingers, &c.

IF I WERE A QUEEN

(*From* "BLACK BUT COMELY")

IF I were a queen I'd make it the rule
For women to govern and men obey;
And hobbledehoyes to be kept at school,
And elderly gentlemen hidden away.
But maids should marry at sweet sixteen—
If I were a queen, if I were a queen!

If I were a queen I'd soon arrange
For a London season the whole year round;
And once a week, if we wanted a change,
We would dine by the river and sit on the ground,
When lawns are sunny, and leaves are green—
If I were a queen, if I were a queen!

If I were a queen, the lady should choose,
Taking her pick of them, round and square;
None selected should ever refuse,
Bound to wed, be she dark or fair,
Stout and stumpy, or lank and lean—
If I were a queen, if I were a queen!

If I were a queen, on Valentine's day
Every girl should receive by post,
Flaming letters in full array,
Of darts and hearts burnt up to a toast ;
With bows and arrows, and Cupids between—
If I were a queen, if I were a queen !

If I were a queen, I'd never allow
Tax on unregistered goods like these—
A woman's reason, a lover's vow,
A stolen kiss, or a silent squeeze ;
A wish unspoken, a blush unseen—
If I were a queen, if I were a queen !

A WORD FOR CHAMPAGNE

(*From "TILBURY NOGO"*)

I SIGH not for woman, I court not her charms—
The long-waving tresses, the melting dark eye—
For the sting of the adder still lurks in her arms,
And falsehood is wafted with each burning sigh.
Such pleasure is poisoned, such ecstasy pain—
Forget her! remembrance shall fade in champagne!

For the bright-headed bumper shall sparkle as well,
Though Cupid be cruel, and Venus be coy;
And the blood of the grape gushes up with a spell
That years shall not deaden, nor care shall alloy.
It thrills through the life-blood, it mounts to the
brain—
Then crown the tall goblet once more with champagne!

The miser may gloat o'er his coffers of gold;
The merchant may balance investment and sale;
The land-holder swell with delight to behold
How his acres are yellowing far o'er the vale:
But mine be the riches that blush on that plain
Where the vintage of Sillery teems with champagne!

Rejoiced is the sage when his labours are crowned,
And the chaplets of laurel his temples adorn—
When pure gems of science are scattered around
A name still undying to ages unborn ;
But benumbed are his senses, and weary his brain—
Let him quaff at the fountain which foams with champagne !

Ambition is noble, they tell ye—to sway
The fate of an empire, a nation to rule ;
To be flattered and worshipped, the god of a day,
And then learn to cringe in adversity's school.
But vexed is the spirit, the labour is vain ;
And the crest-fallen statesman flies back to champagne !

Then give me champagne ! and contentment be mine !
Women, wealth, and ambition—I cast them away.
My garlanded forehead let vine-leaves entwine !
And life shall to me be one long summer's day,
With the tears of the clustering grape for its rain,
And its sunshine—the bright golden floods of champagne !

“GOODBYE!”

(From the “WHITEHALL ANNUAL”)

FALLING leaf, and fading tree,
Lines of white in a sullen sea,
Shadows rising on you and me;
The swallows are making them ready to fly,
Wheeling out on a windy sky.
Goodbye, Summer! Goodbye, Goodbye!

Hush! A voice from the far-away!
“Listen and learn,” it seems to say,
“All the to-morrows shall be as to-day.”
The cord is frayed—the cruse is dry,
The link must break, and the lamp must die.
Goodbye, Hope!—Goodbye, Goodbye!

What are we waiting for? Oh! my heart!
Kiss me straight on the brows! And part!
Again! Again!—my heart! my heart!
What are we waiting for, you and I?
A pleading look—a stifled cry.
Goodbye, for ever?—Goodbye, Goodbye!

THE TRUE CROSS

THE TRUE CROSS

A Legend of the Church



INTRODUCTION

A VISION OF THE NIGHT

I

ONCE it befell that in a Great Lone Land
I seemed to wander, sleeping while I lay,
Nor hope I had at heart, nor help at hand,
Nor friend to guide and cheer me on the way,
Nor pilgrim's staff my faltering steps to stay :
But doubt and fear my spirit to consume,
And round me gleams, too pale for light of day,
Reflected on the waste, and, in the gloom,
Faint, sickening airs, like those that hang about a
tomb.

II

And through the dusk of wavering shadows, where
A dull earth melted in a duller sky,
The waft of beating wings, that longed to bear
Some vexed, unquiet spirit, fain to fly,
But downward urged by pressure from on high,
Yet thirsting for the fount where daylight streams,
While doomed in outer darkness here to lie.
Surely, a land of ghosts—a land of dreams—
Where every shifting shape is other than it seems !

III

And high above me, threatening from afar,
Omen of dire confusion and affright,
Burned in the murky skies a blood-red star,
Fierce as a beacon, flashing through the night
To warn the nations with its baleful light,
That Death and Strife shall ride abroad ere noon ;
Then, turning from its glow mine aching sight,
Behold !—twin herald of destruction—soon
Rose from the level earth a broad and blood-red Moon.

IV

Strange and fantastic objects thus I saw,
Called into being by the glare it shed—
Visions to bid my heart stand still with awe,
Dim, shadowy shapes and phantoms of the Dead.
While ever, like a funeral pall outspread,

Sad, slow, and solemn, moved from place to place
A sable cloud of mourning overhead,
And figures passed before me, with the trace
Of hopeless doom declared on every stricken face.

V

Then, as the light grew stronger, I beheld
Each phase of mortal sorrow and despair.
One, by a life's affliction crushed and quelled,
Betrayed in livid lip and stony stare,
The pangs a broken heart had learned to bear,
Too sad to mourn, too humbled to revile ;
Another did but traverse here and there,
With restless eyes aflame, and reckless smile,
Fierce as a wild beast trapped, but all untamed the
while.

VI

Some, as with burden of their sorrows bowed,
Crept through the shadows, crouching lowly down ;
Some in defiance walked, erect and proud,
With haughty brows, that seemed in scorn to frown
Beneath the torture of an iron crown,
White-heated, till the brain was scorched and
seared ;
And some with stealthy gait, and girded gown,
Prowled in each other's footsteps, flouted, jeered,
Aimed unsubstantial blows, and glared, and disap-
peared.

VII

But all were silent—silent as the leaf
That noiseless Autumn nips from off the tree—
Silent as sudden agony of grief,
That numbs us ere we struggle to be free,
And cry aloud to One we cannot see,
Imploring Him who made to spare and save—
Silent as Winter on an arctic sea,
Hushed to a frozen wind, a fettered wave :
As peaceful childhood's sleep—as troubled manhood's
grave.

VIII

And through the tufted herbage, dank and cold,
In silence while I passed with silent tread,
A chill came curdling o'er me, for, behold,
My white and naked feet were dabbled red
With ghastly moisture by the grasses shed,
That looked and smelt like blood! And then I
knew,
Surely as though 'twere whispered by the Dead,
How all the waste was crimson with the dew
Of all the murders done, the murderous ages through.

IX

But, faint and feeble, still I stumbled on,
Nor dared to hope that I might reach the end
Ere courage wholly failed, and strength was gone,
Unless the hand of mercy should extend



"The embers . . . the figure of a cross have formed."

Some pledge whereon my weakness might depend—
A sign, ere light had faded in despair,
My steps to guide, my wanderings to befriend.
While yet was scarce conceived the unspoken
 prayer,
Behold ! a shadowy Cross loomed through the shadowy
 air.

X

And every phantom, as it flitted past,
Bowed in acknowledged homage at the sight ;
Its woeful burden earthward while it cast,
And hurried on, as though to claim of right
A shelter from the brooding storms of night !
Yet none that once had seen it turned again,
But seemed impelled, by some resistless might,
To find a certain solace for their pain,
And seek a soul's salvation, surely not in vain.

XI

Here was a figure, stately in the pride
Of manhood's strength and stature, tall and brave,
But scowling, haggard-faced, and gloomy-eyed—
A rebel, who had thought it scorn to crave
Forgiveness on the threshold of the grave ;
Yet now, before that holy sign, constrained
In meek submission suppliant hands to wave—
Hands that from deeds of blood had not refrained,
By no compunction stayed, by no regard restrained.

XII

And here a woman, with her hair unbound,
And brows of beauty, lustrous, though defiled
With shame that bade her grovel on the ground,
Clasped in her shapely arms a little child
With close embraces, and caresses wild—
And thus a mother's lesson fain to teach,
Uplifted to the Cross her babe, that smiled,
And stretched its tiny hands as though to reach
And hold the priceless Truth that creeds are framed
to preach.

XIII

Next came a troop of children, clad in white,
Fresh as a bank of flowers in early Spring,
With fair young faces, innocent and bright,
And voices sweet as woodland birds, to sing
A loving carol for their Lord and King ;
Till by the angels echoed, faint and far,
Through distant depths of Heaven it seemed to
ring—
For surely such akin to angels are,
Born of the light itself, pure as the Morning Star.

XIV

Too soon they vanished, passing through the gloom,
And all the waste was silent as before.
Then I beheld three mourners by a tomb :
One bent him down, as in affliction sore,

Crushed to the very earth ; another bore
His badge of sorrow flaunting ; but the third,
Nor tearful mask nor sable garment wore,
Nor needed to disclose in sign or word
The pain he nursed unseen, the plaint he made un-
heard.

XV

But, like a wounded creature, high and low
Directed helpless glances of despair ;
With piteous eyes, that wandered to and fro,
As if they fain would plead with earth and air
For ease of anguish too intense to bear ;
Till, dimly shaped in the uncertain light,
The lofty Cross stood out before him there !
And all his sinking spirit at the sight
Seemed lifted up to Heaven from gulfs of Death and
Night !

XVI

Then I too hastened onward, knowing well,
Here was a certain refuge from the blast ;
Here was a bulwark from the storms of Hell :
Here was the goal of Life attained at last !
Gladly I seized the Cross and held it fast,
While, through the cloud above, a trembling ray
Some pale and gentle star of Mercy cast,
And in my heart I heard an Angel say,
“ Poor Child of Sin—behold ! thy Sin is washed
away ! ”

XVII

And lo ! beside me stood an aged man,
Wrapped in a palmer's gown of dusky hue ;
And down his furrowed cheek a tear-drop ran—
A tear-drop, precious as the morning dew,
A weary soul to freshen and renew.
The while, with reverend arm outstretched, he
showed
Far on the dim horizon, scarce in view,
A distant streak of golden light that glowed :
“ And there,” he said, “ is Heaven, and there is
thine abode.

XVIII

“ And when thou askest, how this guilt of thine
To such pure realms of glory shall attain ?
I answer, none before this Cross divine
Who prayed their hearts out, ever prayed in vain ;
And He who hung thereon in mortal pain,
The pangs of shame and anguish freely bore
For such as thee to win immortal gain,
The birthright of thy freedom to restore,
And take thee to Himself—his own for evermore ! ”

XIX

“ What shall I give Him in return ? ” I cried,
“ Who stooped from Heaven to give his life for me ? ”
“ Give Him thine heart ! ” the aged man replied ;
“ One thankful sentence from a bended knee,

One mite in loving homage, offered free,
One cup of water in His name bestowed,
Is all the service He requires from thee.

Farewell ! and sometimes think of one who showed
This easy path to Heaven, and set thee on the road ! ”

XX

He vanished while he spoke, and in his place,
Behold ! a shining Spirit, clad in white,
With bloom of youth eternal on the face,
And in the eyes a lustre calm and bright,
Caught from the fountain of eternal light.
But even as the morning’s joyous glow
Seems tempered by remembrance of the Night,
Their glance was softer, deeper, for the woe
Of unforgotten tears, that dimmed them long ago.

XXI

While pointing upward to the Cross that stood
A grave majestic symbol o’er us there,
The growth and history of its sacred wood,
Predestined in the birth of time to bear
His gracious form, who came to save and spare,
That Spirit told. And every hopeful word
I drank, as hunted creatures drink the air
That brings them life, for all my soul was stirred,
And all my heart went up in worship while I heard.

XXII

And though the Vision faded out with day,
Though waking to the world it vexed me sore
That all my dream should thus have passed away,
Yet holy fruit the holy lesson bore,
For surely Truth remains for evermore—
Nor, sought in earnest, shall be sought in vain,
Though oft it lies too deep for human lore.
Its sacred purport therefore to explain,
Even as I heard the tale I tell it now again.

BOOK I

THE SEED

STATELY and sad, the radiant being stands,
Grief on his brow, but vengeance in his hands
A glorious Angel, vexed by wrath and shame
A sorrowing Angel, with a sword of flame.
Abashed to meet those eyes of love and scorn,
The sire of countless sinners yet unborn,
First unit, first transgressor of his race,
Bowed in remorse, and, burning with disgrace,
Stoops his imperial head, and veils his stricken face.

The Garden, gorgeous in its maze
Of flower and fruit, of wood and wold,
A westering sun sets all ablaze,
In leafy masses tipped with gold;
Where insect, reptile, bird, and beast,
In light and warmth, above, below,
The greatest couching by the least,
Are basking in the evening glow—

Peaceful, as when their Maker scanned
His creatures in benignant mood,
Surveyed the fabric of his hand,
And saw that it was good.
While he, but yesterday the lord of all,
His lost dominion wincing to recall,
Can scarce accept the award that bids him roam
A wanderer, yearning for the gates of home,—
Can scarce believe his lot is now to stray,
A hopeless exile, on an aimless way :
No loving hand to guide his steps aright,
Nor daily counsel sought at morning light,
Nor simple, sinless trust, to shelter with by night.
Bitter the thoughts that rankle as they rise,
How easy was the task, how rich the prize !
To mark, unwearied, undepressed by toil,
The generous yield of an unfurrowed soil ;
To lip the ready fruit that ripened free,
In lavish clusters on the ungrafted tree ;
The herd to count, the docile flock to tend.
In kindly rule, a master and a friend.
No irksome burden this for Man to bear,
The Maker's honour, and the creatures' care ;
No grievous impost surely to afford
Love for his charge, obedience to their Lord !
But now, 'tis done ! Naught can the past restore
And Eden's gates are shut for evermore.
The one temptation helpless to forego,
The one great secret yearning but to know,
Soiled by the very dust whence he was sprung,
Duped by the woman's hand, the serpent's tongue,

The wrong accepting, while he knew too well
The right—he listened—wavered—ate and fell.
Its work of expiation to begin,
Already waits the penance on the sin.
His mate he blames for her seductive part,
Dethrones her image in his troubled heart,
And half exults, and sorrows half to know
That she who made the trespass, shares the blow
His second self, his love, his life, for him
The cup is filled with sorrow to the brim,
Too deep to mourn aloud, too keen to own.
And thus the Angel speaks in pitying tone,—

“Blot on our Master’s fair design,
Man, fallen Man, believe
Sin to record so foul as thine
The very sons of Light repine,
Though all unused to grieve.
Did He not make thee good and great,
Who raised thee from the dust,
But little lower in estate
Than those who, at the golden gate,
In mute obedience watch and wait,
The servants of His trust!
And shall He not avenge the crime
Hereafter, in the depths of time—
Of time, that but for thee
Had glided on, a guiltless dream,
Unruffled as a summer stream,
Into Eternity?
Now, in the round of trouble brought

By each returning sun,
An expiation must be wrought,
A daily penance done.
Race after race the doom must share
In travail, grief, and pain—
The morning task, the nightly care,
The labour spent in vain ;
The longing for a future yet
Sublimar, purer, higher ;
The baffled hope, the weak regret,
The unfulfilled desire.
The spirit, shrinking back in fear,
Its homeward path to tread,
Though worn and beaten, smooth and clear,
By footsteps of the dead,
Or sick and weary, loth to bear
Its burden to the end—
That, sheltering in a blind despair,
Can court eternal sleep, and dare
To meet it as a friend,—
Behold ! Like watches of the night,
Age after age shall pass away,
Until the coming of the light,
The dawning of the day,
When, in a new and wondrous birth,
Thy race shall be forgiven,
That Love and Peace may reign on earth,
And perfect joy in heaven.
Take comfort then, and lift thy head :
The seed of Her who wrought the woe
Shall bruise the Serpent in his tread.

Shall heal the sick, and raise the dead,
Nor scorn to give the hungry bread,

And—for our Ruler wills it so—
The doom accepting in their stead,
Shall ransom all his own below.

Thus, when thy fault its bitter fruit hath borne,
When teem on earth the thistle and the thorn,
When from the tree the leaf must wither sere,
When mildews blight the promise of the year,
When droughts of summer rack the gaping soil,
Or frost of winter robs the fruit of toil,
When in the skies the eagle soars amain
To strike the kid that frolics on the plain,
When o'er the mangled carcase of its dam,
The lordly lion mouths the helpless lamb,
When from a vexed creation, Peace hath fled,
And rest is scarce accorded to the dead—
Their glorious end thy children shall attain,
And find in sorrow, labour, want, and pain,
How suffering grows to joy, and earthly loss to gain.

From dust shall millions rise,

To dust that shall return,

Whose million souls shall win the immortal prize,

The immortal wages earn ;

And, in each effort of self-sacrifice,

The immortal lesson learn,

That teaches universal love,

Compassion for a brother's woe,

Unbounded faith in God above,

Unshaken trust in man below ;

And lowly homage, fain to take

Example from their Lord and Friend,
To follow in His steps, and make
Their abnegation for His sake,
Who loved His people to the end.

But for their father's sin,
The children of thy rescued race
Would never seek the better part to win,
The higher place—

Could never learn that, wrung from out the soil,
The yield is but the offspring of the toil ;
That patience owes her birth to storm of woes,
And strength from efforts, oft repeated, grows ;
That courage, kindling to a danger near,
Sounds but the note of triumph over fear ;
And sorrow, training humbled hearts to bear,
Reprieves them on the threshold of despair,
To bid them cry on God, and save themselves by prayer.

Thus in the womb of every ill,
Obedient to his Maker's plan,
A germ of good shall quicken to fulfil
The destiny of Man.

Even as the stir and sap of Spring
From icy Winter shall be born ;
As deepest shades of Night shall bring
The gleams of Morn—

So, true to this paternal law
The better still shall lurk behind the worse,
That, smiling up to Mercy, Faith may draw
A Blessing from a Curse.

Thy heart is sad and weary now,
Thy step is weak and slow,

Already on thy conscious brow
Is set the seal of woe.
In gathering glooms of fear and doubt,
Quenched is thy light ;
Blind and forlorn, thou goest out
Into the night.

But we can stoop from perfect bliss to own
A brother's part in human guilt and shame,
The holiest angels round the holy throne
Can pity, while they blame.

For had not we a fallen brother, too ?

Hurled from his place on high—
A brother, beautiful as morning, who
To hopeless strife in wild rebellion flew,
And writhing now in impotence to die,
Drowns in the gulf of fire, to which he drew
A legion, glorious as our own, while true,
The Princes of the sky.

Woe to the Dragon ! woe to him whose guile
The banded host of Heaven could thus divide !
Woe to the Serpent ! crawling to defile
The woman's heart ! Woe to the woman's smile !

Thine erring guide,
That bade thee fall in folly, weak and vile,
As angels fell in pride.
And thou art duly punished, and must bear
Through many a grievous year thy load of care,
Fain to be gone, yet hankering to remain,
And half impatient, half inured to pain.
Too jealous of thine own degenerate race
To yield without a pang the Master's place,

While noting, sad and wistful, day by day,
The pride of manhood wasting to decay,
Conscious of blunted senses, dull and dim,
The vigour failing with the falling limb,
The fainting soul, reluctant to depart,
The shrinking stature and the narrowing heart
Till droops the weary head upon the breast,
The closing eyelids ache to be at rest,
And feeble, fleeting, lost in every breath,
Life only flickers up to welcome Death.
Such is thy penance—Man, it must be so !
Though guiltless spirits share thy guilty woe,
And angels, weeping round the immortal shrine,
Must veil their eyes in grief for thee and thine.
No prayer of ours a pardon yet can gain,
Not all the tears we shed can cleanse the stain.
A holier price thy trespass must recall,
More sacred drops on thy behalf shall fall ;
I tremble while I speak, I dare not tell thee all.
Behold, poor outcast lingering by the gate,
In memory of repentance found too late,
In token of the trespass and the tree,
Seeds of its fatal fruit, I offer, three.
The gift I charge thee all thy life to save,
And bid thy children plant it on thy grave.
So, in the fulness of appointed time,
When shoots the sacred sapling to its prime,
That mystic growth shall surely serve to trace,
Age after age, the story of thy race.
In all its varying turns of fortune share,
To chance, and change, a faithful witness bear,

Remain, itself uninjured by decay,
While shifting nations fade and pass away
To mark how growth of evil, once begun,
Takes wider scope, bequeathed from sire to son,
Till Mercy, weary of the hopeless strife,
Uncclasps her hands to plead no more for life,
And darker, deeper, closing deadlier in,
A waste of waters hides a world of sin.
Yet shall a chosen few the judgment fly,
Nor all thy children thus be doomed to die,
And in the Ark that floats them safe and fair,
A plank from that strange tree the freight shall bear
Preserving and preserved, the gulf to span,
To bridge the coming history of Man.
Thereafter, planted in a Southern land,
With fresher leaf, and growth renewed to stand,
Shall screen a patriarch's tent upon the plains,
And shade the angel-guests he entertains.
Its task not yet fulfilled, again shall feel
The rasping malice of the limber steel,
Cut, planed, and deftly fashioned to a board
That roofs in pride the Temple of the Lord.
Enriched with golden plate and clamp and ring
To crown the wisdom of the wisest king;
Thence in a day of vengeance, wrath and woe
Torn down and trampled by a foreign foe,
When Judah's warrior turns in shameful flight
To mark his Lion, worsted in the fight;
When heathens, raging in their godless ire,
The holy places waste with sword and fire,
Stripped of its wealth, denuded of its state,

Polluting hands shall thrust it from the gate,
Hurling the charred and blackened beam to cool
And rot, neglected in Bethesda's pool,
For ages in those shallows to remain,
Half-bare and half-submerged—but not in vain.
For soon the troubled waters shall reveal
Its virtue, conscious of their power to heal,
And soon, distorted figures, warped and wrung,
The aching limb, the swoln and palsied tongue,
The halt, the maimed, the blind—a suffering band,
At stated hours shall round the margin stand,
With pale and eager faces, fain to prove
The cure, and, watching till the surface move,
Await the turn that bids their anguish cease,
Wash and be clean—and so depart in peace!

Yet light of day once more to meet,
In cruel shape the beam shall stand
Its expiation to complete,
Its victim to demand.

I see a wild and tossing crowd,
I see it break in angry waves
Around an eagle-standard, proud
To flaunt above a race of slaves.

I see a priest with garments rent,
I see a warrior bright in mail,
I see, with pain and labour bent,
A patient figure, worn and spent,
A face resigned and pale,—

A scarlet robe in mocking state,
In savage jest a crown of thorn.
And up the street, and by the gate,

Through all that malice can create,
Of scoff and jeer, and stormy hate,
While Manhood sinks beneath the weight,
God's Cross of Ransom borne.

Enough! I veil mine eyes in awe,
In horror, wrath, and shame,

Nor dare I question his decree, whose law
Forbids the Legions of his Host to draw

Their swords of flame,

And flying earthward, urged by holy ire,
To cleanse in blood, and purify with fire,

The honour of his name.

But He who drives the wanderer out to-day,
Whose will to save, exceeds his power to slay;

Whose mercy ever leans to pardon first,

Who suffers long the vilest and the worst,

For thee and thine hath store of pity still,

And bids thee trust him yet through good and ill:

Else had his angel never dared to trace

The wondrous future of thine erring race,

Predestined in the pangs of mortal strife

To win their heirship of immortal life.

And now the doom is read, the tale is told,

The volume of the mighty plan unrolled:

A crime—a curse—a forfeit and a loss—

A gain—a hope—a ransom and a cross.

For thee the lines are drawn, the lot is cast,

Before thee lies the Future—on the Past,

Poor child of sorrow, turn, and look thy loving last!

The words were yet upon his tongue

When back the flashing portals swung,

The gates of fire and gold.
On this our earth hath never been
So fair a sight as lay between,
Nor eye of man hath ever seen,
Nor speech of man hath told,
Nor mind of man conceived in all its lore,
Such marvels as one glimpse of Eden bore.
The world without was dark and bare,
A shadowy waste of gloom and sin,
But streams of lustre filled the air,
A flood of glory shone within—
It came direct from Him, whose might
Had wisely planned and fashioned all;
It knew no change of day and night,
It could not cease, nor fade, nor pall,
It bathed the sward in dazzling white,
It hung the tree with jewels bright,
Its very dews were drops of light
From heaven that seemed to fall.
And in the midst, with silver spray
That, like a living thing at play,
Shot upward in the face of day,
A fountain, crystal-clear,
Leapt, laughed, and sparkled in its mirth
To four great streams while giving birth,
That watered all the bounds of earth,
And took their rise from here.
Beside it stood a mighty tree and tall,
Stripped of its bark, with foliage in the fall,
For round its trunk, in many a writhing fold,
A Serpent clung—that Serpent wise and old,

Who, gathering venom through the peaceful time,
Had spotted God's own garden with his slime.
About him, shrunk the leaf, and paled the fruit,
Below, the unpoisoned tree struck healthier root,
In pointed fibres, sharpening as they grew,
To pierce his coils, and stab him through and through ;
Yet, while he curled in anguish well concealed,
His sleek and subtle head no sign of pain revealed.

Bewildered, horror struck, to gaze

On sight so awful, thus unrolled,

The exile stood in blank amaze,

Till now the Angel bade him raise

His eyes yet greater marvels to behold,

And looking upward see,

With branches spreading wide and free,

The stately summit of that mystic tree

Its leaves in Heaven unfold.

With richer growth expanding in the air,

Bud, fruit and flower uniting, fresh and fair,

As though in lavish yield rejoiced to fling

Its wealth of Autumn o'er its hopes of Spring.

While through the bowers of green, with blossoms
graced,

With twining shoot and tendril interlaced,

Soft, pure and white as flakes of falling snow,

Seven gentle doves were flitting to and fro ;

A simple music murmuring, sad and sweet,

In strains they never wearied to repeat,

On restless pinion wheeling, fain to bring

Unceasing homage to their Infant-King.

For on that tree so good and fair,

So garnished in a wealth untold,
Of all it promised, all it bare,
The richest fruit behold !
Brighter than dawn, and undefiled
As morning's opening ray,
A living babe—a holy child,
More beautiful than day !
And while the seven doves were winging
Seven circles round its head,
Seven stars, their lustre flinging,
Seven spirits, praises singing
Watched about the bed
Whereon that Infant lay reclining,
Tended by the hands of One,
Pure as gold beyond refining,
Clad in raiment white and shining,
Dazzling like the sun—
A Woman of a gracious port and eye,
Kind as the earth, and comely as the sky.
She stooped her brow, serene and fair,
To look upon the Child
And wound her arms about him there
With all a mother's helpful care,
And half in pride, and half in prayer,
She blessed him when he smiled.
The love between that holy twain
Was more of heaven than earth ;
A mother's love conceived in pain,
By faith sublimed, to entertain
Belief in His eternal reign
To whom its pangs gave birth,

Nor yet in earthly sorrows to forego
Its earthly part of suffering, fear, and woe.
Enraptured in a trance of mute delight,
Long gazed the outcast on that goodly sight,
While tears of grateful hope and sweet surprise
Swelled at his heart, and mounted to his eyes.
In sullen mood, he had but thought as yet
The forfeit, not the trespass, to regret.
Till now, a true repentance to begin,
The sense of pardon taught the shame of sin ;
Roused a remorse, existent, though it slept,
And thus his conscience smote him—and he wept.
The Angel marked that mien so altered now,
And brighter shone the star upon his brow,
For well the gentle, pitying spirit knew
That watered thus, the plant of Mercy grew,
And man unfriended, faltering on the way,
Must learn to weep before he learns to pray.
With hands outstretched, his glorious head he bent,
And smiled a brother's love, and blessed him as he
went.

In part consoled, though loth to leave the place,
Our erring father, with dejected face,
Turned from his home behind those gates of light,
And journeyed forth a wanderer through the night ;
To learn, like all his race, that in the strife
Of good with evil, called by mortals, life,
These, for a future destined, must forego
Their share in all they prize the most below.
Each human heart must bear the human test,
And yield to God the love it loves the best.

So shall it rise, the better part to own,
And anchoring earthly hope on heaven alone,
Shall purge immortal ore from mortal dross,
To win a priceless gain in paltry loss.
Nor yet shall common kindly joys forego,
But greet them lightly as they come and go,
With placid trust accepting smile and frown,
Exalted not by this, nor yet by that cast down.
As one to welcome Summer's golden hours,
Who sows a cultured plot with garden flowers,
Can laugh if early frost destroys the shoots,
Or brutal malice pluck them by the roots,
Because, though now the space be spoiled and clear,
Well doth he know that in the coming year
His hands can raise a coming crop ; but he
Who on his ground elects to plant a tree,
Had need preserve its deeper growth with care,
For lo ! the earth uptorn, the place laid bare,
Must henceforth mock the toil he plies in vain,
And on that spot the flowers shall never bloom again !
Thus human love that strikes too deep a root,
In human lives shall bear a poisoned fruit,
And when, the laws of wisdom to obey,
Those plants of Folly must be plucked away,
So tangled is the growth, so keen the smart,
To rend the fibres surely breaks the heart.
But man, in darkest hour of need and pain,
Shall never seek for aid and ease in vain ;
A gentle balm, a soothing salve shall find
In deeds of mercy offered to his kind ;
With sweet compassion lifting those that fall,

Excusing, pitying, helping, loving all.
Thus to absorb in other's woes his own,
Thus for another's errors to atone,
And—since to trip in trespass is to live—
Learn from his God the lesson—to forgive.
So Adam, half unmindful of his fate,
Turned in relenting mood to seek his mate,
Marked the dim shape that followed in the gloom,
And loved her better for their common doom.

He stretched a clinging hand to meet

A clinging hand that met his own,
Nor ceased, nor wearied to repeat
The tender words of solace sweet.

She answered with a moan ;
For, sharper, than a thrust of steel,
It stabs a woman's heart to feel

In self-reproachful pain,
How from the head she loves the best—
The head that shelters in her breast—

She strives to ward in vain
Storms that her own great error has brought down,
Yet finds a smile where she had feared a frown.

He drew her closer, closer yet,
To comfort and to cheer.

Her touch was cold, her cheek was wet,
She never seemed so dear,
And, like a child that shrinks from harm,
She wrapped her in his circling arm,
And silent, pleaded all the charm
Of weakness and of fear.

Thus side by side, and hand in hand,

They passed together through the night—
Before them loomed a shadowy land,
Behind them waned a sinking light,
Yet calm and hopeful, though subdued,
They journeyed on the uncertain way.
Each in the other's altered mood
Saw love renewing and renewed,
While each was fain to say,
“ Though dark the hour, the labour rude,
For hearts with mutual hopes imbued,
There smiles a future to be wooed,
There dawns a coming day !
Then reunited, trusting as at first,
Shall we not share the best, as we can dare the
worst ! ”

And so their burden, each for each
They lightened, while they bore
The loveliest lesson, thus to teach
Of all our human lore.
For he who thinks to stand alone,
Alone shall surely fall—
Our very woes are not our own,
But held in trust for all.
The bitter tears that secret flow,
In solitary pain,
May freshen other lives, although
Our barren hopes can never know
Their fertilising rain ;
And we who work, and we who weep,
Nor weep nor work in vain,
If other hands our harvest reap,

And other hearts with joy shall leap
To garner up our grain.

The wanderers journeyed many an hour,
Nor staid for rest by brake nor bower—
It seemed as though some hidden power,
Or instinct at the least,
Born of their own imperious need,
That yearned for light their steps to lead,
Impelled them onward to proceed,
And drove them to the East.
Till, for his mate, with labour spent,
He paused a little space, and bent
His stately head to her, who leant
Her own upon his breast,
And turned, and bade her mark how fair
The Garden slept behind them, there :
How still the tree—how soft the air
In calm and hush of rest,
And how, retiring, pale, and proud,
The Moon, as in a silver shroud,
Dimmed by a streak of dappled cloud,
Went down into the west.

She marked it all, and marked beside
On that beloved brow,
The bitter shame it strove to hide,
The scorn of self, the wounded pride
That marred its grandeur now.
And drew him to their destined way
And urged him not in vain.

And pointed where before them lay
The promise of approaching day,
A pale and narrow seam of grey,
 Yet level with the plain ;
A scanty rift that widened fast,
In token night was surely past,
And joyous morning come at last
 To gladden earth again.
He found a comfort in the thought,
A comfort by the Woman brought.
 Yet little had availed
Without that hopeful, helpful guide,
Strength, wisdom, fortitude, and pride,
 When all the Man had failed !
Now, like the children of his race,
God's future he was armed to face.
 With Life prepared to cope ;
For, broken, baffled, and bereft,
Those are not wholly lost whose hearts have left
 A Memory and a Hope.

BOOK II

THE ARK

CANTO I

BEHOLD the mountain towering in its pride,
With russet robe, and crown of ruddy gold,
And shaggy fringe of copses crimson-dyed
Beneath the glows of sunset, and behold
The great primeval landscape all unrolled
In grandeur of design, though wild and rude.
The gorgeous hues, the outline free and bold,
Unbridled torrent, and impervious wood,
The wilderness untamed. The world before the Flood!

II

Where mighty monsters roamed, that have to-day
Nor like nor kindred here. The enormous bear,
In deep recess of rocky cave that lay,
Yet made in deep recess a shallow lair.

The ungainly mammoth, coarse with matted hair,
A bulky mass, but half informed with life;
Yet from his torpor roused, should hunters dare
Provoke his sloth, a foe with fury rife,
No unresisting prey in that gigantic strife.

III

And wingless birds that grovelled on the earth,
Half-bird, half-reptile. Such as it would seem
To freak of nature owed abortive birth.
And creatures mis-begotten of the stream,
In hideous shapes, fantastic as a dream,
When in a trance the sleeper's fears prevail,
And shadowy horror quenches reason's gleam,
Formed but a lewd and loathsome length to trail,
And score the yielding slime with armour-plated scale.

IV

And there was beauty, such as not since then
Hath shone on earth to dazzle earthly eye.
Beauty! that worn by daughters but of men,
Could yet disturb the councils of the sky,
And draw God's very children down to die.
And there was strength colossal, such as reared
A race of Giants, stubborn, proud, and high—
A daring race, that neither hoped nor feared,
Regarded naught on earth, nor aught in heaven
revered.

V

For wild the dreams of passion that had been
In those wild mountains, when the world was young.
When sons of God, their nature to demean,
Consumed with longing, yet with anguish wrung,
Their starry crowns to earthly idols flung,
Their snowy robes in earthly mire defiled,
Duped by the loving glance, the flattering tongue,
Exulting, even thus betrayed, beguiled—
Lured from their high estate because a woman smiled.

VI

Sweet were the tortures of the summer night,
The rapture of suspense, and more than sweet
The agony of joy and fierce delight,
That bade her wind about the Vision's feet,
And upward writhe his scorching clasp to meet.
But bitter was the end, and keen the smart
(Such oft-told tale it boots not to repeat),
For still the doom is shared when lovers part—
One bears a broken faith, and one a broken heart.

VII

Then were there stricken faces, vexed and pale,
That through the waste went flitting here and there,
Like phantoms seeking rest without avail,
And haggard eyes, and backward-streaming hair,

And hands outstretched to heaven in wild despair.
While ever swelled and sank and swelled again,
A piteous wail that quivered in the air,
A woeful music set to fitful strain,
The dirge of buried hopes, and love that loved in vain.

VIII

Yet hence arose a fierce imperious race,
Of glorious beauty and gigantic frame,
Who owed their demon-strength, their angel-face,
To link of heavenly guilt and earthly shame,
With holier natures kindred who could claim,
But felt for holier natures haughty scorn ;
Inviting evil, courting hate and blame—
Stern with the proud, yet trampling the forlorn,
And still inflicting wrong on all of Woman born.

IX

Insatiate in a mad desire of strife,
A thirst for danger, and a wild delight
To take at every turn, or peril—life.
Exulting in the triumph of their might,
Yet loving less the victory than the fight.
To fear unable and untaught to spare,
Rejoicing to pursue, by day and night,
Huge beasts of chase, the mammoth or the bear,
And track the monster home, and slay him in his
lair.

X

Bathed in a crimson glow of eventide,
The crimson glow that flooded all the west,
There stood a figure on the mountain-side,
In scanty garments of the hunter dressed,
With sinewy limbs and mighty bulk of chest,
Tall, strong, and fair, a comely child of sin,
Yet of his race the gentlest and the best,
And at his feet there lay a monster's skin.
Well was that hunter formed, such dangerous spoil to
win.

XI

For in the combat he was fierce and strong,
Though kind and courteous when the strife was
done.
Wassail and wine he loved, and mirth and song,
Nor smile of woman scorned, though lightly won
In sumptuous banquet, spread at set of sun.
A nature prone to pleasure, prompt to ire ;
Impatient of the curb, not suffering long
Restraint, reproof, nor check to its desire,
For through that earthly mould there coursed un-
earthly fire

XII

Brief was his pause of contemplation there,
For soon, to rouse his keen and practised ear,
Broke on the stillness of the summer air
A ring of tools, repeated quick and clear.

Plank-tearing plane and hammer he could hear,
And rasping saw that grated in and out,
As when some wooden fabric workmen rear
With toil and craft. Not long he stood in doubt,
But gathered up his spoil, and went to seek it out.

XIII

Descending swift the mountain's rugged side,
He bounded down, the wished-for spot to gain.
With light and airy tread, but sweeping stride,
Like some good courser scouring o'er the plain,
That meets in managed leap the mastering rein.
With such good courser's strength and speed endowed,
Like him he halted—short, as in disdain,
And flung his head aloft with gesture proud,
And stood at gaze, and laughed, in laughter long and loud

XIV

For lo! the framework of a vast design,
Now verging on completion, met his eye,
Adjusted well with plummet, scale, and line,
Lest bulwark, beam, or joist should fit awry,
Warped from the seemly level, fair and high,
Of timbers, cornered, each in other's niche.
And, though the wood was seasoned now, and dry,
Its porous grain to strengthen and enrich
By wise preventive care, pitched in and out with pitch.

XV

One thoughtful head the great device had planned,
Eight brawny arms the unceasing labour plied ;
For, clothed in strength of willing heart and hand,
Four goodly men were working side by side :
Three in the comely prime of manhood's pride,
The fourth with reverend brows and beard of grey,
Whose wisdom all the master-craft supplied,
Instructing these his sons, each piece to lay.
Behests of such a sire, well might such sons obey !

XVI

The youngest-born was comely, tall and spare,
Or tool or weapon deftly formed to ply,
With ruddy cheek, and wealth of golden hair,
And gentle mien, and features calm and high :
The next seemed swarthier, tanned by sunnier sky,
With bulky limbs, and chest more squarely made ;
The third, whose keener face and narrower eye
A fine and subtle sense of skill conveyed,
The shrewd constructive power in every glance betrayed.

XVII

Ceaseless had been their toil from break of day,
Nor ceased their toil when day was nearly done
For dark prophetic fear forbade delay,
And coming need of work long since begun,

Impelled to ceaseless effort sire and son—
That coming need though all the world ignored,
Persistent its unbridled course to run,
Provoking vengeance, soon to be outpoured,
And still devising sins of heaven and earth abhorred.

XVIII

For this the skies were heavy with a curse,
Ere long to wash pollution from the land.
Man's thought was evil now, his action worse,
Black was the heart, and red the ruthless hand,
And foul the fires by guilt and passion fanned.
Untamed their wild rebellion, who could dare
The Maker's laws to challenge and withstand,
Of pardon unconcerned, unblessed by prayer,
The doom to turn aside, that trembled in the air.

XIX

Yet could eternal Mercy set apart
One righteous nature from the unrighteous crew.
A man of blameless life, and spotless heart,
With pious precepts stored. A man who knew,
And practised, godly ways, and taught them too.
For him and his the judgment could suspend,
In purpose to preserve that chosen few,
Their needs to help, their weakness to defend,
Bestow them in its care, and keep them to the end.

XX

So, while his erring brethren ate and drank,
Married and gave in marriage, as they would ;
Their souls in vile pollution steeped and sank,
And chose the evil while they saw the good—
The tide of life's corruption he withstood,
Sought the deep silence of the forest-glade,
To commune with himself in solitude,
And on behalf of friends and kindred made
Oblation to his God, and wept, and knelt, and prayed.

XXI

Nor did his God forget him, in the gloom
And stillness of the woods, but stooped to lend
A gracious ear, and warned him of the doom,
And spoke, as speaks a mortal with his friend,
Vouchsafing partial pardon to extend,
Nor scorned to teach him how to plan and make
An ark, his charge to shelter and defend,
For of each living thing he bade him take
A sample to survive, and spared them for his sake.

XXII

Thus while the wise directions he obeyed,
And searched the forest diligently through,
He found a goodly giant of the glade—
So vast of girth, so stately, that he knew

(For old tradition pointed where it grew)
How Seth had seen those budding branches wave,
And Enos spared the growth, himself should hew.
For that great tree, up-towering fair and brave,
Struck deep its ancient root in Adam's ancient grave.

XXIII

With brandished axe he brought it to the ground,
And carved a mighty beam from out its heart—
A mighty beam, hereafter to be found
The strength sustaining of its strongest part,
In all the floating fabric of his art;
And girded it with iron, to afford
Supporting power, lest it should strain or start,
And in its veins the seething resin poured,
And proved it firm and sound by smiting on the
board.

XXIV

As at his forge in red relief and glow,
A smith, with salient muscles, shoulder-bare,
Completes his hearty labour, blow by blow—
So, tinged with crimson of the evening air,
This master-workman, striking just and fair,
His master-strokes repeated on the wood,
Nor trouble seemed to grudge, nor toil to spare,
But spent his strength, and laboured all he could;
Therefore the giant laughed in no ungentle mood.

XXV

“Old man!” said he, “what boots it thus to
slave ?

Were it not wise the fruitless task to leave,
And join with us, the idle, gay, and brave,
Who love the chase at noon, the feast at eve,
Who in our weapons and ourselves believe ?
Thine seems a long endurance, little worth,
An endless labour, hopeless of reprieve.

Come then, and cheer thy heart with wine and
mirth ;

These are the gifts of heaven, and these the joys of
earth.

XXVI

“Nor are they far to seek. For now behold
The ready banquet, set in order fair
With dainty meats and brimming cups of gold.
Laughter and song, and joyous hearts are there,
And smiling women with their sun-bright hair ;
Nor these brave youths shall linger here the while.
I welcome all ! Then nothing stint nor spare.

For thee the cup ; for them bright woman’s smile
The lagging hours of night shall sweeten and beguile.

XXVII

“Such are the gods that heaven and earth subdue,
Such are the gods we worship, for we know
Their rights the strength and courage shall renew
That scorn to shrink from aught above, below,

Nor yield to mortal nor immortal foe.
Rouse then thy failing heart with mirth and wine ;
So shall the mounting pulses leap and glow,
While manhood all its forces shall combine
To trample human might and beard the power divine !

XXVIII

“ To-morrow in the flush of morning’s pride,
Together will we fare, a laughing band,
Our joyous measure treading side by side,
Our voices blending—linking hand in hand,
To fire these goodly timbers where they stand ;
Sweet incense then shall pitch and resin raise,
Homage from him who worked to him who planned—
Forsooth, a pious offering all ablaze !
Said I not well ? Old man, thou shrinkest in amaze ! ”

XXIX

But he whom thus the haughty youth addressed,
Across laborious brows his garment drew,
And paused a space of no unwelcome rest,
Though vexed and sad his thoughtful visage grew
As one who feared the future he fore-knew,
Its gathering cloud of evil loth to scan,
So many that should compass, spare so few ;
When, in accordance with its Maker’s plan,
The Earth should sink engulfed, borne down by sins
of man.

XXX

“ These are the gods ye worship ! ” he repeated ;
“ False gods ! false worship ; falsest trick of all,
By such delusive idols to be cheated !
How shall ye look when on your gods ye call
In stress of need, the bravest to appal ?
When upward still the avenging waters glide,
And downward still the avenging waters fall,
And woman’s pliant grace, man’s stalwart pride,
Are borne like wisps of weed, waifs on the mount-
ing tide.

XXXI

“ When, blinded by the green encircling wave,
The baffled mother choking in despair,
Shall toss her arms aloft, her babe to save,
Launched to the dwindling peak of granite, where
The tigress licks her cubs, with famished glare,
And grating claws that cling in slippery hold,
Yet couches to await the prey ; but ere
That reeking breath the living child enfold,
Lo ! the dead woman sinks through waters deep and
cold !

XXXII

“ While all around with bloated corpses rife,
A wrecked creation spots the heaving deep :
Some lifted upward, dance, as mocking life,
Some through the veiling surface loathsome peep,

And still the cruel waters laugh and leap.
How fare your brethren now, the strong, the brave?
Call on your gods aloud ! and bid them keep
Their children from the rolling ruthless wave—
Call on your gods, I say ! Your gods that cannot
save !

XXXIII

“ On *my* God will I call. On him rely
Whose laws I love, and in his truth confide.
To safety shall he waft me fair and high ;
Nor counsel shall withhold my course to guide,
Borne on the flow of that resistless tide,
Which shall not ebb, nor dwindle, nor abate,
Till you and yours have foundered in your pride—
Swamp'd, with the brutes to perish small and great.
Will ye not turn in time ? It is not yet too late ! ”

XXXIV

Loud laughed the giant. “ Dotard ! fool ! ” he
said ;
“ But that it rouses mirth such tales to hear,
My wrath had sure descended on his head
Who in my presence dares to mention fear,
Or hint I value danger, far or near.
The deeps may rise—I'll bale them in my shield !
The skies may fall—I'll prop them on my spear !
Worse can I dare than thou hast thus revealed,
Yet scorn from Fate to flinch—to God refuse to yield !

XXXV

“ And if it come to pass, these words of thine
Hereafter are fulfilled, remember thou
No whit I shrank from power nor wrath divine,
Nor ’bated aught of what I tell thee now.
While planted firm on solid earth, I vow,
That if but one square inch of standing-room
This curse of spreading waters shall allow,
Engulfed and sinking in that yielding tomb,
Thy God will I abjure, and dare his instant doom ! ”

XXXVI

Once more he laughed, and scornful strode away,
Nor paused for that concerned and sorrowing face,
So fain to bid him ponder yet and stay,
As though already, ere he left the place,
In sad prophetic instinct it could trace
Pale fires of doom about the comely head,
So comely, yet so proud, like all his race ;
Could mark the faded eyes, their lustre fled,
The gallant beauty marred, for ever lost and dead.

XXXVII

Grieving, one ceased from toil with fall of night ;
The while to eat the fat, and drink the strong,
Gay with his boast, exulting in his might,
The other sped those forest-glades along,

Guided by clash of cups and burst of song,
That bade him to the joyous feast repair.
With notes of mirth that to such scenes belong,
High rose the tide of revel, free and fair,
And torches flashed and streamed, to redden all the air.

XXXVIII

There were the cups that glow, the gems that gleam,
And glorious women with their hair unbound,
And lovely faces, lustrous as a dream,
And snowy, shapely arms, gold-girded round.
Bright were their looks and smiles, and sweet the
 sound
Of those soft voices rippling round the board ;
And each had lost a heart, and each had found
The loss supplied a master and a lord,
Whom for a space she loved, and while she loved,
 adored.

XXXIX

For Woman then was fond, as Woman now,
When Man is less heroic than of yore.
Deep was her wit, though calm and smooth her
 brow ;
Deep was her heart, and tender to the core,
Ungrudging all its treasure to out-pour
At those dear feet she worshipped for a while.
Yet, changing once, she changed for evermore,
And, fain to lure fresh captives in her smile,
Still a fresh triumph found, fresh lovers to beguile.

XL

By that proud youth, of all the women there
The proudest and the loveliest sat her down ;
Bright were her glances, on her forehead fair
The glory of her tresses wreathed a crown,
And jewels looped her hair and looped her gown.
Yet when he spoke she scarcely bent to hear,
Nor much she seemed to heed with smile or frown,
But in her eyes there came the lovelight clear,
That shone for him alone—the loved one, whispering
near.

XLI

And now she blushed and trembled with delight,
And now she stumbled in her speech, and sighed,
And longed, in coolness of the outer night,
On that broad breast her burning brow to hide,
Alone with *him*, her treasure and her pride.
For here were noise and glare, and laughter rang,
Till gaily on her name some reveller cried.
Then ceased the tongues to wag, the cups to clang,
And sank the din of mirth to silence while she sang.
 “ I weep and watch—I weep and wait.
 He cometh not—he cometh late—
 My lord, my love, my angel-mate,
 Thou tarriest long !
 My heart is humble now and meek.
 My heart is full, I needs must speak,
 My heart is sad and sore and weak,
 But love is strong.

And ringeth in my brain its knell,
Farewell! Farewell!
Thy kiss yet burneth on my brow,
The burning kiss that sealed thy vow—
My lord hath ceased to love me now—
I make my moan.
Oh! joy when heart on heart could beat!
Oh! madness when our lips could meet!
Come back, and I will kiss thy feet!
My King! my own!
Come back! I pray—beseech—implore!
Once more—once more!
Will he not hear me? Yes—behold
The mist of stars—the shine of gold!
His wings are round me as of old.
Oh! vision vain!
To mock my longing, loving sight,
One instant with its flood of light,
Then fade in deepest dark of night,
Nor rise again.
How hard to bear, tongue cannot tell!
Farewell—Farewell—
Farewell! ”

XLII

Died the sweet voice away in trembling tone,
Yet lingered in the hearts of those who heard,
And bade them know its sadness for their own;
While each, with choking throat and vision blurred,
Felt all the finer chords of nature stirred.

Though one alone she valued o'er the rest
Nor look of love betrayed, nor uttered word,
But stole a seeking hand to hers, and pressed
The kind and clinging hand, that answered, thus
caressed.

XLIII

And so they passed in cruel joys the day,
So drank and shouted through the calm of night,
In scorn of that just man, who bade them stay
Their reddened hands, their ruthless, reckless
might,
Although his work was daily in their sight—
Accomplished now through toil of many a year
Exulting all his warning to requite
With unbelieving jest, and flout, and jeer.
And thus they lived and laughed, and thus the end
drew near.

XLIV

Till one still night there stole upon the breeze
A mournful whisper, troubling all the air,
As though a spirit moaned among the trees,
And prayed for rest with piteous pleading prayer,
Reproachful of the boisterous revellers there.
Each looked enquiring in the other's eyes,
And each returned the other's wistful stare,
Or smiled, a grim foreboding to disguise,
And set the goblet down and listened in surprise.

XLV

Soon was the riddle read, and broke the spell,
For like a pelt of stones by slingers cast,
Drop following drop, that widened as they fell,
Each larger, heavier, angrier than the last,
The hissing storm descended, thick and fast.
On night's dark brow there came a darker frown,
Rose the wild whisper to a wilder blast,
While insect, flower, and fruit to drench and drown,
Poured from the blackening skies great sheets of water
down.

XLVI

Then Woman's eye dilated, paled her cheek,
And Man his brow uplifted, bold and high,
As fain in heaven or earth his foe to seek—
The foe in heaven or earth he would defy.
Whom shall he dread who dreadeth not to die?
And wrung by fear, again and yet again
There broke from gentle hearts a stifled cry,
While these in horror, those in fierce disdain,
Laughed—shouted—whispered—scoffed—"Behold!
The rain! The rain!"

CANTO II

I

The rain—the rain. In ceaseless, silent fall
It varied not nor stinted day by day,
Wove o'er the soaking earth its misty pall,
And blurred the landscape in a shroud of grey,
Uncheered, unbroken by a rift or ray.
Loomed in the haze gigantic, rock and tree,
On wood and hill thick folds of vapour lay,
Bubbled the spring, the fountain spouted free,
And streams to rivers swelled, and rivers to a sea.

II

A dim grey sea, that covered all the plain,
By peak and islet studded here and there,
Thronged with a swarm of living creatures, fain
On each dry spot for refuge to repair.
Great beasts of field and forest, birds of air,
Scared by a watery world, a watery sky,
That looked to heaven in silent pleading prayer,
And turned on earth a solemn, seeking eye;
And flocked, and roamed, and roared, and shivered,
loth to die.

III

For while the narrowing island dwindled fast,
And while the widening waters swelled and rose,
By press of common need together cast,
Tamed by a common danger, crowded those
Whose habits in their freedom made them foes.
Yet did the stronger push the weak aside,
While inward still the remnant sought to close,
Till came the mastering flood o'er all to glide,
And bore the conqueror off, and swamped him in its
tide.

IV

Some wrestled hard, ere yielding thus to die,
And some without an effort sank outright;
Some drowned with angry snort and bubbling cry,
And some struck out and swam with all their might,
By nature's instinct urged, for life to fight.
In dumb and dogged hope that sought to gain
The distant upland, hidden from their sight,
Their failing strength to rack, their limbs to strain,
And struggle blindly on, but struggle on in vain.

V

Each higher mountain pass ere now was thronged
With mighty moving creatures from below,
Whose short sharp cry, or dismal howl prolonged,
The fierce suspicion of a lurking foe,
And sense of coming danger, seemed to show

While, undetected yet of eye or ear ;
With stealthy gait they traversed to and fro,
Or thundering up and down in wild career,
Pushed, worried, fought, and gored, in anger and in
fear.

VI

For while destruction threatened from afar,
Destruction none the less was close at hand.
In every thicket lurked the insidious war,
By man called sport, that man's device had planned
To sweep his game, God's creatures, from the land.
Nor wanton wounds nor death he spared to deal,
Nor size nor strength his cunning could withstand,
That bade the mammoth in its death-pang reel,
And to the cave-bear's heart drove home the quivering
steel.

VII

The lordly race that slaughter loved so well,
Because the waters covered all below,
On loftier mountains now were fain to dwell,
Exulting in vain-glorious boast to know
What gallant herds those wooded heights could
show—
Great monsters, worthy of the days of yore,
Such as their fathers hunted long ago.
And since the rain had fall'n, they laughed and
swore
The chase was nobler, livelier, deadlier than before.

VIII

At peaceful morning-tide they rose to slay,
With noisy revel scared the hush of night;
Man's fiercer instincts prompted to obey,
In wine and wassail took a wild delight.
Great human hearts rejoicing in their might,
Yet conscious of a calm resistless power,
That still refused to spare and scorned to fight;
That, day by day, caused darker skies to lower,
And bade the creeping flood gain on them, hour by
hour.

IX

But yet they took nor heed nor warning, knew
No worship but their own unholy will.
A fearless, ruthless, reckless, godless crew,
In time of wrath predestined to fulfil
The award of Him who did but threaten still,
Whose vengeance in each cloud although they saw,
Heard in each breeze that moaned about the hill,
Nor shame nor fear they owned, nor shrank in awe,
God's precepts to ignore, and break man's sterner law.

X

And now behold, as heretofore revealed
By one inspired who preached to all the rest,
The fountains of the mighty deep unsealed,
Great tidal waves that mounted unrepressed,
Dark—shining—edged with white and ragged crest.

That wrapped the hills in their embraces cold—
Hills that should sink and perish, thus caressed ;
That drove each living thing from hold to hold,
And upward seethed and surged, and onward roared
and rolled.

XI

Thus for each cubit's breadth of standing-room,
Imperious Man was now compelled to strive
With brutes, the dumb companions of his doom ;
Fain from their nook the monster-cubs to drive,
And save his own weak shivering babes alive.
Till some fierce mother that he thought to slay
Would rise in her despair to rend and rive,
When, grappling in the base inglorious fray,
The impartial waters came and swept them both away.

XII

Yet, like the autumn fruit in mellow skies,
That drops mature and noiseless from the tree,
These lordly natures, with defiant eyes,
Sank stern and silent in the silent sea.
While earth remained, they laughed and revelled
free,
When earth was gone, they wrapped them in their
pride
Untamed in this the last extremity ;
Looked scornful up to heaven, then turned aside,
And set their dogged teeth, and cursed their God, and
died.

XIII

While, if some lowlier spirit seemed to cower,
And shrank to meet the phantom, face to face,
That scared its senses in this darker hour,
Tradition and inherent pride of race
Taught such a late repentance was disgrace.
Who but a coward would recall the past?
Or hope in death, life's journey to retrace?
Behold! the sin was sinned, the lot was cast!
Together would they sink, together drown at last!

XIV

Fenced in a cleft of rock, remote and high,
Like sea-birds sheltering from the stormy air,
Perched on some ledge of granite, smooth and dry
Behold ensconced aloft a lonely pair!
One who had heard the prophet's pleading prayer,
Yet scorned the voice prophetic to obey,
And one who lured him here in tender care,
And scarce acknowledged hope that for a day
The doom she might suspend—the judgment thus
delay.

XV

And these had loved each other with a love,
Though born of earth, and earthly in its kind,
Yet tinged with holier lustre from above,
The fair and chastened ray of heaven, designed

To lead us up to light, however blind.
For those who, in their lives, one single grain
Of pure and true affection have refined,
And wrung from viler dross through grief and pain,
Their labour have not lost, nor lived nor loved in vain.

XVI

And it was thus with Adza, she whose song
Made plaintive music but a while ago,
(How short a while it seemed !) when Man was
strong,
The yet unquestioned lord of all below.
Now, after forty days of judgment, lo !
Together on this bleak and barren place
They sheltered them in stress of fear and woe,
And each looked blankly in the other's face,
The sole surviving pair of all their impious race.

XVII

She nestled closer to his side, and said,
"Ithor ! my lord and love, were it not well
To make submission now, and bow the head ?
How long in safety here we have to dwell,
It needeth sure no prophet to foretell.
Cubit by cubit, still the waters rise,
Still, wave by wave, they roll in longer swell.
Behold them round us level with the skies !
Soon must we part in death—I read it in thine eyes.

XVIII

“ And we have been so happy ! Oh ! my own !
That happy past, my heart can yet retrace ;
I see thee at the feast, about thee thrown
The robe my skill devised thy form to grace.
I see thee rushing god-like in the chase,
Through toil or danger, joyous, proud, and high,
While ever shines a light about thy face,
Caught from the beams of an adoring eye.
My lord, my love, my king ! And must I see thee die ?

XIX

“ I owe my birth to sires of lordly line !
Mine is the blood of princes, but, behold,
That princely blood can boast a strain divine,
Left by those Sons of Light, of whom 'tis told,
How on the mountains they came down of old,
And pledged to earthly love a heavenly vow,
Their earthly brides in heavenly wings to fold.
Ah ! surely these were fairer then than now !
Wilt thou not hear me plead ? Nay, never bend thy
brow,

XX

“ Nor in displeasure turn away thy face—
The face that day and night I long to greet.
Hast thou not known and proved me of their race
Who grudged no cost their spirit-lords to meet,

And poured their lives out at an angel's feet?
Yet which of these a tale of love could tell
So true as mine? That tale should I repeat?
Hast thou not found, though good or ill befel,
In every turn of fate I loved thee more than well?

XXI

"Then hear me now! In this last refuge placed
When of our perished kindred, thou and I,
Two living atoms on the watery waste,
Are left alone, and left, it seems, to die!
Yet not without vague hope of safety nigh,
For, while my weary eyes are strained to gaze
Where meet the misty sea and misty sky,
Unless our grievous plight their senses daze,
Behold, a dim dark shape glides slowly through the
haze!

XXII

"'Tis surely that strange fabric, long ago
Built in the mountains we shall see no more,
By him, whose wisdom for the time of woe,
A safe and cunning shelter planned, before
The angry skies their floods began to pour.
His aid, our only hope, I bid thee crave.
It cannot shame thee, Ithor, to implore
Man's succour now, thy life and mine to save.
See, love, it lips our feet, the cruel creeping wave."

XXIII

“It cannot shame me!” he repeated, while
There came a woeful lustre in his eye,
Though round his lip was set the changeless smile
Of proud despair, the worst that can defy.
“Is there no shame then, love, when death is nigh,
In fear of death, submission thus to make?
Thus like a frightened child for help to cry?
Would I could find it in my heart to take
The coward’s part, and bow my pride for thy dear
sake!

XXIV

“But when I scoffed at him, who, scoffing now,
Rides on in safety, yonder through the gloom,
No foolish boast was mine, no empty vow,
That while on earth it left me standing-room,
Unmoved I would confront this watery doom,
Betray no symptom of remorse nor fear,
My right of Man assert, my rule assume,
While that one spot was left me dry and clear,
And bear me like its lord and king, as I do here!

XXV

“Yet would I not that thou shouldst perish too.
So much thy life is dearer than mine own,
That scarce these rising waters should I rue,
Could I but battle here with death alone!
How dear thou art, too surely hast thou known,

Yet dearer still than thee, I needs must hold
The word I passed, and for that word atone.
What though the boast were somewhat free and
bold,
This is no time to flinch, and wish the tale untold.

XXVI

“But thou art not to suffer thus, because
This stubborn pride of mine can now defy
Our Maker’s wrath, as once our Maker’s laws.
It needeth but a single suppliant cry
To gain that roomy refuge floating by.
I would not have one precious hair be wet
On that dear head! Then, leave me here to die.
Look to thyself, beloved one—and yet,
Adza! in time to come thou wilt not quite forget!”

XXVII

“Forget!” she murmured low, and turned her
eyes
On his, and laid her hand within his own.
But that her bosom heaved in fall and rise,
But that each breath came choking through a moan,
She seemed a soulless woman, carved in stone.
Then, roused to sense of all she felt and feared,
She woke, and with her arms about him thrown,
Wept on his breast, till brows and brain were
cleared,
And while she wept the Ark passed on and dis-
appeared.

XXVIII

Not till its outline faded into space,
Cleared from her eyes the cloud of fear and pain ;
But now the courage mounted to her face,
And while she raised her head in sweet disdain,
The light of life beamed in her looks again.
For though she was but woman, worn and weak,
Though the devouring waters rose amain,
And though she laid to his a death-cold cheek,
In that fond breast there swelled a love that bade her
 speak.

XXIX

“ And now,” she sobbed, exulting, “ heart to heart,
Lip glued to lip, together will we drown !
Locked in a last embrace, ere yet we part,
A loving life in loving death to crown,
Cling each to each, and so sink calmly down.
Laugh, cruel waves, your laughter we defy !
Frown, angry heavens, we scorn and mock your
 frown !
What can we lose or gain, my love and I,
Who hide nor hope to live, nor own a fear to die ?

XXX

“ One jot thou hast not ’bated of thy pride,
The pride on which I seem to build mine own,
For I am prouder, shivering by thy side,
Here on our scanty ledge of dripping stone,

Than reigning safe, without thee, on a throne.
Nor would I seek a fairer end than this,
To meet the worst at last with thee alone,
To baffle doom of death in dream of bliss,
And spend my parting breath in one long clinging
kiss ! ”

XXXI

She spoke—and when she paused, across his brow
There swept a short sharp agony of pain,
That shuddered in his very eyes, for now
Each pulse that beat was sounding on his brain
The knell of hope, that could not live again.
And now the waters coiled about their feet,
To pinion wrestling limbs that strove in vain,
Yet each to other clung. Ah ! deadly sweet,
The maddening kiss of lips that nevermore should
meet !

XXXII

Lit by a love, unconquered to the last,
Shone in his eyes a lustre through despair,
And o’er her face a pale sad glory past,
While, of that race rebellious none to spare,
The waters wrapped their shroud about the pair,
Too proud to live, alas ! too fair to die.
And thus, their task fulfilled and ended there,
Rose over-head, exulting, fathom-high,
And smiled in calm expanse, unbroken to the sky.

CANTO III

THE ARK

I

Yet were not all to perish. On the wave
A wondrous fabric floated, buoyant still,
Some remnant of creation that should save,
Ranged and disposed, its goodly bulk to fill;
For He who life bestowed was loth to kill,
And in His wisdom shelter thus prepared,
For brutes to stock and human hands to till
A world renewed, forgiven, cleansed, and spared,
As, ere the evil days, His mercy had declared.

II

When of each beast that trod the solid earth,
When of each bird that clove the yielding air,
Of creeping things produced in slimy birth,
There mounted to the Ark a chosen pair,
Each coupled with its mate, in order fair,

While food of every kind that should supply
Each creature's need was stored and gathered there,
Ruled by a master-hand, a master-eye,
To guide the motley freight that rode 'twixt sea and
sky.

III

None were neglected. Here in slumber lay,
But not beyond that master's ken and care,
Fenced in and well secured, the beast of prey,
To dream it couched in darkling forest lair,
Screened in the leafy brake from noon-day glare,
Or lurked by forest-pools among the trees
Where to its antlered victim should repair—
Then rose—with quivering nostril snuffed the
breeze—
Yawned—stretched its sinewy length, and laid it
down at ease.

IV

Here too, majestic in his size and weight,
Propped by a beam, the elephant reclined,
With tusks, as mightier than his tuskless mate,
Like her with lengthened tapering snout, designed
In sinuous supple touch to reach and find
The food he mumbled, calm, sedate, and slow—
A beast that seemed informed with human mind,
That reason more than instinct seemed to show—
More than the brute to feel—more than the man to
know.

V

But he who placed the towering creature there,
Room for the locust and the emmet found ;
None were too insignificant to spare—
Bird, insect, beast, nor reptile of the ground,
All deftly folded, each within its bound.
Yet each had space to breathe and turn at will,
Each fed at peace with those that hemmed it round ;
And though their ark these creatures seemed to fill,
For fodder timely dealt was left a passage still.

VI

Because through all their living kingdom, where
The patriarch and his sons passed to and fro,
On great and small they lavished kindly care,
The nature to observe, the needs to know,
Of all that perched aloft, or stood below ;
Whose wistful looks devoured the passing store,
Whose wordless cries arose, their wants to show—
The wolf's long howl, the snort of bristled boar,
The lamb's unquiet bleat, the lordly lion's roar.

VII

Here, too, were ranged, by keen judicious eyes,
The beasts that went on earth with parted hoof,
But did not chew the cud, or otherwise,—
Clean and unclean, according to the proof,

Each from its converse strictly kept aloof.
While on a timber, laid across above,
'Mong fowls of heaven that roosted in the roof—
A bird of omen next a bird of love,
The muttering raven croaked, and mourned the mur-
muring dove.

VIII

Pining for airy flights in summer skies,
The eagle and the osprey mused apart,
Reposing, but with shining, eager eyes,
And folded pinions, longing to depart
And upward bear the roaming, restless heart,
That yearned for freedom in its waking dream.
And here were birds that wade, and birds that dart
In woven circles, flashing down the stream ;
And birds that soar and sing, and birds that sit and
scream.

IX

Crept from its hole the lizard, changing hue
With every change of light the eye to mock.
And burrowing things there were, that shrink from
view,
The delving mole, the coney of the rock,
Prolific in its race, its haunts to stock ;
And moths and bats, and creatures from the ken
Of morning light to cornered nooks that flock :
And beasts of sloth that, in secluded den,
Sleep out their drowsy lives, unscared by sight of men.

X

Here lowed the kine ; and each with fragrant breath,
And full mild eye, was fain her milk to lend.
Here fawned the dog—true servant to the death
A master's goods to keep, his life defend—
Man's foster-mother, and his firmest friend.
Here fed with stamp and snort the generous steed,
Strength, courage, mettle, glorying to expend,
And through the battle bear his lord at speed,
And strain each gallant limb to serve his utmost need.

XI

Here, with his sullen head and wreathing crest,
The ungainly camel crouched, morose and strong,
Mistrustful of the heaving board he pressed,
Fierce when aroused to wrath, though suffering long ;
Here pondered too the ass, of daily wrong
Forgiving, humble, patient of the rod—
Thereafter, in a burst of praise and song,
Ennobled, while the sacred palms it trod,
And bore, in triumph meek, the Incarnate Son of God.

XII

But in this goodly Ark, of human lives
Were only these : the builder with his mate,
The three fair sons that helped him, and their wives ;
Snatched from the common doom remained but eight,

Content on their Creator's will to wait,
Believing that ere long would cease to lower
The skies, ere long the waters would abate.
Rejoicing in affliction's darkest hour
To lean on endless love, and trust in boundless power.

XIII

While many a cubit high the flood prevailed,
One hundred days and fifty now were gone,
Nor had those waters yet assuaged nor failed,
And o'er their face the Ark moved slowly on,
As moves on summer lake a gliding swan.
Till widening, strength and lustre while it gained,
Streamed through the mist a sunbeam, pale and wan ;
The fountains of the deep at last restrained,
Heaven's windows seemed to close, and now no more
it rained.

XIV

Then, tearing into shreds a filmy veil
Of vapoury wreaths, that floated low and high,
Uprose a breeze, and mounted to a gale,
And drove the clouds careering through the sky—
A mighty wind ere long the earth to dry.
For, faith and hope at last no more to mock,
Drained to the mountain tops the floods drew nigh,
Till, all its timbers quivering in the shock,
Struck the great Ark and poised aground upon a rock.

XV

Yet still, for forty days, the patriarch chose
In patient pious trust to watch and wait,
Then stretched his hand the window to uncloze,
As judging in his wisdom, that of late
Began the waters surely to abate,
And sent a raven forth, to prove and know
If yet there seemed an anchorage for his freight.
Flapped his broad wing the raven, loth to go,
And circled round the Ark, and flitted to and fro.

XVI

Then did he free a dove, that darted forth,
And up and down she flew, and round and round,
To traverse west and east, and south and north,
And scoured that glassy, watery world, nor found
In all its bright expanse one spot of ground.
Home to the Ark her failing flight she pressed,
And housed her gladly in its sheltering bound,
With dainty feet unsoiled, and spotless breast,
But weak and weary wing, that knew no pause of rest.

XVII

As holding all creation in his care,
The patriarch waited seven days yet, before
He loosed his scouts again upon the air,
By sea and sky to wander and explore.

The raven went his way and came no more,
But, by her instinct warned of its decrease,
The dove returned, and in her beak she bore,
In token that the flood should sink and cease,
An olive-branch—the type of hope and love and peace.

XVIII

Another seven days still he waited, then
A third time freed the bird with gentle hand.
The bird flew swift and noiseless out of ken,
To seek and find a home upon the land,
For, yearning on some growth of green to stand,
To midmost heights of heaven she seemed to soar,
A widening range of upland thence she scanned,
Made for a fringe of woods that lined the shore,
And to the stranded Ark returned she never more!

XIX

Fond, timid, gentle, shrinking like the dove,
That broods and murmurs softly in her nest,
Creeps to man's heart a thing that men call Love.
Surest when hidden, strongest when suppressed,
Of all God's gifts the deadliest or the best—
For at its worst, in needless torture rent,
With self-inflicted pangs it racks the breast,
Or, by its own excesses drained and spent,
It sleeps itself to death—exhausted in content.

XX

When thus of earthly nature, from the earth,
In earthly greed, its viler food it draws,
But when to heaven it owes a heavenly birth,
Seeks in a loftier sphere its heavenly cause,
And rules its purer growth by heavenly laws ;
Then upward to the light it seems to make
Its way, unhindered by mistrust or pause,
And blesses those who give, and those who take,
As each to other yields, each for the other's sake.

XXI

Thus, when our ark that bird of peace pervades—
Our human ark of joy and hope and fear,
Oh ! drive her not away to distant glades !
For dismal is the blank she leaveth here,
—And still the nest is warm, the bird is dear.
Once, twice, she flieth homeward as before,
Forgiveness bearing, our remorse to cheer,
Yet urge her not too often, lest she soar
Far out of human sight, returning nevermore !

XXII

But now, behold ! the patriarch looked around
With careful ken the watery waste to view,
And from the watery waste emerging, found
Another world, bright, beautiful and new—

Rose peak, and cape, and island, fair of hue,
Fell the great flood, as falls an ebbing tide,
And while the margin sank, the mountain grew,
Its spurs and ridges spreading far and wide.
Thus welcome Land appeared, and stretched on every
side.

XXIII

Soon from their sea-worn refuge, open now,
A long procession filed in order fair ;
Teemed with incongruous life the mountain's brow,
Rang with incongruous cries the mountain air ;
While all creation, ranging, pair by pair,
In stately measure passed the patriarch's eye :
The patriarch's eye, that scanned with jealous care
Bird, beast, and reptile, moving slowly by,
Creatures that walk, and wade, and bask, and creep,
and fly.

XXIV

Of shapeless stones, uncouth, untouched by tool,
Such as the mountain-fissures could afford,
He took enough and piled them up by rule,
And built therewith an altar to the Lord,
To sacrifice, in thanks for life restored,
Of each clean beast and bird a chosen pair ;
Then from the shattered Ark he rent a board,
The mid-most of its crumbling strength that bare,
And set it all aflame to burn his offering there.

XXV

Yet kindling less than kindly, damp and slow,
To embers charred and smouldering where it lay,
Exuding rather smoke than fire, although
But half consumed, the patriarch cast away
Its blackened remnant, on a future day
To strike a downward root, and upward tower,
In leafy shelter from the blinding ray
That heats a southern air to furnace-power,
And blisters all the plain in noon's remorseless hour.

XXVI

Thus tossed and tilted down the steep incline,
Its use fulfilled, a thing of no esteem,
Though once the mystic growth of seed divine,
A torrent, plunging headlong, caught the beam,
And whirled it, like a leaf, upon its stream,
And leaped and laughed, to snatch it from the hill;
Then bore it statelier on, as it would seem,
Triumphant such a waif to float, until
Constrained to yield it up, God's purpose to fulfil.

XXVII

When shrunk and ebbing from its swollen pride,
By rush of mountain floods no longer fed,
On distant verge, that marked its fallen tide,
Far from the silver track that formed its bed,

Where wound the dwindling river like a thread,
Its burden it should leave aground and dry,
From rich alluvial soil to shoot and spread
In growth gigantic, rearing to the sky
A leafy crest and arms that tossed and waved on high.

XXVIII

But now in rolling wreaths of smoke, to spend
Its goodly fragrance on the freshened air,
Began the patriarch's offering to ascend,
While rose to reach his God the patriarch's prayer.
Reverend he stood, with feet in homage bare,
Direct from their Creator, over all
His creatures to receive dominion there,
That every moving thing should be his thrall,
To quail beneath his eye, and tremble at his call.

XXIX

Thus for the brute creation to obey
The rule of Man, subservient to his might,
Beasts of the field at need to fell and slay,
And use them like the herbs, he gave him right.
But warned him in the fratricidal fight,
If ruthless hands were stained with guilty red,
How life for life such trespass must requite,
In just reprisals on the murderer's head :
"Who sheddeth blood of Man, Man's law his blood
shall shed !"

XXX

For Man in image of Himself, God made ;
And with a father's condescending care,
To Man's finite conception thus conveyed
A sense of Him, to whom he cried in prayer.
Nay, in that likeness all our sins to bear,
And ransom with His blood our erring race,
Man's shape corporeal He vouchsafed to wear.
Who then shall dare that image to deface,
Doth outrage to his God, of whom it beareth trace.

XXXI

Also He gave him pledge, so long as rolled
Our earthly ages in their courses here,
That summer's heat should wait on winter's cold,
That harvest after seed-time should appear,
To mark the changes of each passing year.
And thus assured him hope, without alloy,
Of labouring daily on, unvexed by fear,
To eat the fruits of toil, in thankful joy
That this, his world, a flood should never more
destroy.

XXXII

The token of that promise, firm and true,
For coming time established, then to show,
Sun-striped, in bands of each prismatic hue,
Behold ! against the cloud he set his bow,

That henceforth man should never fail to know
How bright a smile could shine behind their frown
And span the skies with glory of its glow—
An arch to compass heaven—a radiant crown—
A bridge for angel feet to travel up and down.

XXXIII

And thus, the voice of instinct to obey,
When from the Ark had trooped an endless train
Of creatures, cooped therein for many a day,
With life and strength renewed, of freedom fain,
(For none seemed willing to return again,)
With those stout sons, his mission to fulfil,
The patriarch, too, went down into the plain
The vine to plant, the soil to cleanse and till,
And people many a land, urged by his Maker's will.

XXXIV

For all above was bright and joyous now,
And all below was balmy, warm, and dry;
Splintered the sunshine on the mountain's brow,
Hushed in its heat the valleys seemed to lie,
Nor moved the cloud that floated on the sky.
Great sheets of wild flowers painted plains untrod;
Luxuriant bursts of Nature, low and high,
Wove wreaths of verdure o'er a teeming sod,
And fertile earth, forgiven, looked smiling up to God.

BOOK III

THE TREE

IN midmost heaven the sun was high,
Stirred not a breath to cool the sky,
And fell, like fiery rain,
Sheets of a bright and blinding glare
That seemed to scorch the upper air,
And, pouring down amain,
Bathed in a burning glow of gold,
Rock, mountain, valley, wood and wold.
Scarce could the ox his head uphold,
Of stream and shelter fain ;
Scarce could the lamb find strength to bleat,
So fierce and hard the sun-beam beat.
The pasture shrivelled at its feet ;
And glimmered through a blaze of heat
The Cities of the Plain.
Pleasant and goodly to the eye,
With lordly tower and palace high,
And circling rampart crowned.

In every level space and bare,
By temple, terrace, street and square,
The gracious palm was feathering there,
And gushed the fountain, free and fair,
To slake the stones and cool the air.
And spice, and myrrh, and odours rare,
And raiment rich, and costly ware,
And all that wealth for ease could spare

Were freely scattered round.

While, wasteful in his pomp and pride,
Feasted the rich, and at his side
The starving beggar moaned and died,

Unsheltered on the ground.

Revelled the strong in wine and lust,
The weak were trampled in the dust;
None were remorseful, none were just,

And none were righteous found.

Though brave and bright those buildings gleamed
But whited sepulchres they seemed,

Corrupt and rank within,

And all without a mocking show,

A bitter strife of high and low—

Oppression, treachery, wrath and woe,

A downward stream in endless flow

Of selfishness and sin.

By heaven and earth alike accursed,

Cities, the vilest and the worst,

In every thought of evil nursed,

In deeds of darkness ever first

Each outrage to begin.

So bold in error man had grown.

Guilt, that no penance could atone,
His wicked heart rejoiced to own.

And dragged him through the mire,
Exulting in its loathsome stain,
Each hideous vice to entertain,
From no pollution to refrain

In foulest of desire.

Nor praise he offered to his Lord, nor prayer,
Nor pity for his brother felt, nor care,—
His only thought, with every passing hour,
To feed his fancy, or increase his power.
Prompted by lust of heart and sense and eye,
With boldest sinners in their sins to vie ;
From dark excesses drawing mad delight,
And breaking Nature's law by day and night.
With lies and slander nourished, clothed in guile,
Presumptuous, yet disturbed with dread the while—
Sleek, pampered coward, vilest of the vile !

And Woman, from her nobler self debased,
Now for a whim exalted, now disgraced,
Each purer, holier feeling to destroy,
In turn a dupe, an idol, and a toy,
With shameless haste descending from the throne
That, while she queened it there, was hers alone.
Unsexed, undone, to gain a worthless end,
Her lures, her love, her beauty stooped to lend.
No more inciting to heroic deed,
The hero she was proud of, proud to lead,
His hopes her own, his triumph her reward,
Merged wholly in the nature she adored—
No more in mutual cares of wedded state,

Friend, mistress, and counsellor of her mate
Urgent to claim a wife's unchallenged part,
The undivided empire of a heart—
But like the robe, that in her dainty pride,
For lightest speck or stain she flung aside—
A gaudy thing to covet, and to prize—
An empty thing—to leave and to despise—
Her lawful rights compelled to extort or crave,
Alternately a tyrant and a slave.
Yet was she fair, in spite of every wile :
The painted blush, the false and artful smile,
The known device, the too alluring bait,
The lisping accent, and the mincing gait.
For still, though foul and fallen, there lurked a trace
Of angel-beauty in her woman's face,
To show, through haggard eyes and altered mien,
Not what she was, but what she might have been ;
Nor seemed she wholly lost, for at her worst,
Some soft and gentle fancies still she nursed,
Hid in her inmost heart and kept it fast
Some sweet remembrance of a happier past ;
Still, by her subtle woman's instinct taught,
Preserved, through guilt and shame, some purer
thought,
Fed in maternal cares a holier fire,
And loved the babe, though weary of the sire.
But, like a spreading ulcer, festering sore,
That wastes the flesh, and eats into the core,
Throughout the frame-work of the social plan
A foul corrupting taint of evil ran—
A taint that seemed imparted in a breath,

Unerring symptom of a moral death,
Pervading and infecting high and low,
Forerunner of impending wrath and woe.
For this, the wanton rich in scarlet state
Swelled high with pride, and scorned his neighbour's
hate ;

For this the weary poor, oppressed and ground,
In broodings of revenge his comfort found.
For hearts of common interest thus bereft,
Nor faith, nor truth, nor honour, could be left.
Intrigued the feeble, tyrannised the strong,
And each to all the rest did foul and shameful
wrong

Yet one there was whose spirit grieved

Such hideous sinks of vice to know.

One who in God and man believed,

And hope of pardon thus conceived

For sinners at their worst, reprieved,

In very doom of instant woe.

One who in youth had never failed

To serve his Lord with praise and prayer.

Whose pious plea had oft availed,

And oft on Mercy's ear prevailed,

His erring fellow-men to spare.

For still in sacred rite, and holy test,

The son of Terah godliest seemed, and best.

Therefore his Lord preserved him as he went,

By flood and field, in city, cave, and tent ;

Coerced the royal Egyptian to forbear

From fraud or force, though Sarah's face was fair ;

And led him out of Pharaoh's treacherous land,

As leads a sire his youngest by the hand,
Increased his substance, gave him store untold
Of camels, asses, flocks and herds, and gold.
Far as his sight could travel, bade him know,
On him and his the earth he would bestow,
And brought him, rest and shelter to obtain,
Where towered the tree, by Mamre on the plain,
Predestined from his wanderings there to cease,
And taste a holy calm in sweet repose and peace.

For ages now had past,
Since on its margin cast,
A sinking river left the mystic beam
From a shattered ark up-torn,
By a torrent hither borne
And stranded, when it dwindled to a stream,
To strike its downward root,
And push its upward shoot,
And wave its spreading branches free and fair,
Like some darkling forest glade,
A mass of rippling shade
To shelter all the creatures of the air.
No goodlier it grew,
When Noah came to hew
Its substance, for completion of his plan ;
Nor threw its shadow round,
On wider space of ground,
In early age of patriarchal man.
And he who sat beneath it there,
With solemn looks and reverent air,
No whit less worthy showed
Than Lamech, Jared, Cainan, Seth,

Or Enoch, who, absolved from death,
With God in heaven abode.
For though his strength was waning now,
Though front and temples bare,
And lines of thought that scored his brow
Showed sign of time and care ;
Though beard and locks were snowy white,
Shone in his glance the steady light
Of godly courage, true and bright,
That battles calmly for the right,
Nor doubts to conquer all in fight,
Armed with the undefeated might
Of sacrifice and prayer.
Grave was his aspect, clear his eye,
Serene and open like the sky,
Ample his frame, and towering high.
While free and firm he trod,
With kingly gait of conscious worth,
As one deputed here on earth,
In time of danger or of dearth,
A viceroy, by his God.
His tent was pitched upon the plain
Of Mamre, near the sacred tree ;
For there behoved him to remain,
His angel-guests to entertain,
That thus the patriarch might foresee
The noble future of his line,
Predestined by the will divine,
In furtherance of its great design,
A chosen race to be.
A chosen race, preserved to stand

Before their Lord in many a land,
Protected by his favouring hand.
In number like the grains of sand,
Uncounted, by the sea.

Screened by those branches from the burning ray,
He sat before his tent at noon of day,
And looking outward o'er the plain, espied
Three coming travellers faring side by side ;
In haste he rose and ran to meet them there,
And bowed him to the ground, and spoke them fair,
And prayed them turn aside to do him grace,
Abiding in the shade some little space,
Their limbs to rest, and wash their dusty feet,
And cheer their weary hearts with bread to eat.

Fresh from the herd, the tenderest calf he slew,
Hot from the hearth the daintiest cake he drew ;
A courteous greeting gave each honoured guest,
And bade him freely welcome to the best.
The simple meal before them thus he set,
And stood at hand to serve them while they ate.
Then spoke the men of Sarah as she went,
In household cares assiduous, through the tent,
Yet woman-like, desirous still to know
Their converse, while she flitted to and fro ;
Thus did she hear their promise to her lord,
That now, though youth was passed, she should afford
An heir for long continuance of his race
In many a good and noble name to trace,
Through prophet, priest, and king, the holy line,
And culminate at last in One divine !

Sprung from *her* babe, hereafter to be born.
And while she listened, low she laughed in scorn.
“ Who laughed within ? ” the stranger said. “ Not
I ! ”

Answered the woman, eager to deny,
Nor trusting yet the power of Him, whose word,
By angel-lips declared, she overheard.
For these, so fair of aspect, so serene
In dignity of bearing and of mien,
In looks so gracious, yet so calm and high,
Were surely God’s own angels from the sky,
And in their eyes a holy lustre shone,
Reflected from the great eternal throne.
Their presence, goodlier than of mortal men,
Yet not devoid of awe to mortal ken,
Though clothed in shape corporeal, made them seem
To mortal sense like visions in a dream.
Even as they spoke, the patriarch’s spirit stirred
With reverend joy, accepting every word.
The hopeful tidings hopefully received ;
And while the woman sneered, the man believed,
Not long they tarried : ere the sun was low,
Though pleaded hard the host, they rose to go ;
Bound for the godless cities of the plain,
Through scorching heat to journey forth again,
They turned their faces from that godly tent,
But left behind a blessing as they went.
So to our hearts, with cares of life oppressed,
There cometh now and then the heavenly guest.
An unexpected stranger, hither brought,
In guise of kindly deed, or holy thought,

Or pitying love, a brother's woe that bears,
And thus bestowing help and tears and prayers,
We entertain an angel unawares.
Not here he makes his home, nor deigns to stay,
His task fulfilled, too soon he speeds away,
To leave us blankly gazing where he shone,
For lo ! the tent is void, the guest is gone !
Yet still a holy light pervades the place
Where late he stood, and eyed us face to face.
Still of his words, that blessed us as they fell.
Caught in our hearts, an echo seems to dwell.
And here, where even now his footstep trod,
We know we held communion with our God.
Nor righteous tents alone their shelter lend,
When strangers such as these from heaven descend ;
By many a rough and weary path they roam,
In many a wayward heart they find a home,
O'er many a gloomy nook the lustre shed,
That leaves a ray reflected when 'tis fled.
And many a humbled, saddened soul they cheer,
That longs to aim at heaven, though grovelling
 here,
Like some poor bird with broken wing that lies,
To cower and pant, and upward at the skies
Direct a pleading gaze, with sad and suffering eyes
Gaze on, and upward still, poor wounded bird,
Though dumb thy plea, believe it shall be heard.
Soiled, stricken, helpless, hopeless, only trust !
A tender hand shall take thee from the dust,
The ruffled plumes shall smooth with careful love,
And lift thee gently to thy home above.

Nor deem too lowly, or too vile thou art,
For there the lowliest, vilest, have a part :
The good, the bad, the early, and the late,
Who kneel and knock, find entrance at the gate ;
The last are pardoned freely as the first,
And He who suffers long hath welcome for the worst.
Brief was the hour of respite lent,
The strangers turned them from the tent,
And journeyed forth again.
With slow, unwilling steps they went,
As though while Mercy might relent,
Affording leisure to repent,
Ere fell the flaming rain—
The floods of fire by vengeance sent,
When time of grace was past and spent,
To seethe and scorch in their descent
The Cities of the Plain.
Attending on their footsteps, there,
A holy instinct to obey,
With pious zeal, and reverend care,
The patriarch brought them on their way.
And side by side while thus they walked,
Unfolding the Almighty plan,
It seemed that when the angel talked,
The voice of God conversed with man,
And told the doom was hovering nigh.
For, vengeance to provoke on high,
From Sodom and Gomorrha came
A daily challenge to the sky,
Uprising in its ceaseless cry
Of grievous sin and shame !

And, therefore, Mercy, suffering long,
But willing yet to spare,
Came down from heaven to sift the throng,
And seek amongst the fierce and strong,
If any from rebellious wrong
Had wisdom to forbear,
Before the day of pardon should expire,
And holy vengeance fall in streams of fire.

Passed from the patriarch's sight,
Like phantoms of the night,
His angel-guests, yet gazed he where they trod,
And stood in rapture, there
To wrestle hard in prayer,
While pleading for the sinners with his God.
That if within the bound
Of their city might be found
A tale of fifty righteous men and true,
For the righteous fifty's sake
No vengeance would He take,
But have mercy on the many for the few.
Then promised him the Lord,
If Sodom could afford
But fifty such within the city wall,
For the fifty that were there,
All the others would He spare,
And the record of His justice would recall.
But the patriarch, not in vain,
Made petition yet again,
That if five of these were lacking from the tale,
For the forty and the five

He would save the whole alive,
In His mercy that was never known to fail.
And abated more and more,
Till at last, if half-a-score
Of the righteous had been found to stand the
test,
Though of good and honest men
Could be numbered only ten,
There was promise of a pardon for the rest.

Thus having stood before his Maker's face,
Returned the pious patriarch to his place ;
And while he pondered on the words of awe,
His soul deplored the doom his sense foresaw.
In pity for the madness of his kind,
And wonder man could be so false and blind ;
Man, who had brain to reason, yet withstood,
In dogged mood perverse, the obvious good,
Sunk in the very indolence of sin,
Because the obvious evil hemmed him in ;
Because of knaves a few, of fools a throng,
Confounding every phase of right and wrong,
Excused a common guilt, a common shame,
By pleading all the others did the same.
How strange it seemed laborious lives to spend
In eager aims at some illusive end ;
To chase the phantoms born of foolish thought,
That proved but empty shadows, lost when caught ;
To pass their days in toil, their nights in dread,
And waste their strength for that which was not
bread ;

The poisoned cup with thirsty lip to meet,
And find its deadly draught not even sweet ;
Hope, health, and heaven to lose beyond recall,
Nor gain a glimpse of pleasure after all !
How sad to think that every sinner there
Was born the rich inheritance to share,
That, like a child in wanton, wayward play,
Of wild misguided mood, he flung away !
How sad to know that each immortal soul
Turned with a purpose from the heavenly goal,
And wandered on with wavering steps to find
The sure destruction of the wilful blind.
As when a madman's hand the kerchief ties,
With cunning smile of madness, round his eyes.
And thus where yawns a dizzy void, below
Some ledge of cliff, he saunters to and fro,
Till straying o'er the verge abrupt and bare,
His stumbling footstep meets the empty air,
Roused by the plunge that curdles every vein,
One flash of reason clears his startled brain,
And waking to his folly and his fate,
He tears the bandage down, enlightened all too late !
Such troubled thoughts the patriarch's soul oppressed,
Disturbed his dreams, and vexed him from his rest,
Pursued him through the watches of the night,
And drove him from his tent with morning-light ;
Help to his kind though eager to afford,
Yet, jealous for the honour of his Lord,
To mark the fierce excess of human guile
Aroused his wrath, but grieved his heart the while.
Foreboding thus some hideous sight to see,

He stood at dawn beneath the mystic tree,
And sorrowing for the doom so close at hand,
Looked forth in sadness on the guilty land.

Behold ! the day of wrath and woe

Had risen with the sun !

For rolling upward, thick and slow,

In heavy volume from below,

Lit by a red and angry glow,

To lurid hues of dun,

The smoke was pouring forth amain,

Where seethed the surface of the plain,

Where floods of fire had fallen like rain,

Where now repentance was in vain,

And judgment had begun.

The shapes of death that veiling cloud

Wrapped in its folds, as in a shroud,

No tongue of man can tell—

The anguish, too intense to bear,

The wild appeal, the fierce despair,

The quivering forms that in the glare,

With shriek and shout, and tossing hair,

Writhed, leaped, and flitted here and there,

Like tortured souls in hell.

One had been clad in purple vest,

And feasted on a throne ;

In rags and filth had one been drest,

And mumbled at a bone.

But he who sat in royal array,

To drain a cup of gold,

And he, who naked by the way,

A scarred and loathsome leper lay,

To beg the crust from day to day,
That scarce could life uphold,
Were equal now in equal plight,
In panic of a blind affright,
In agonies that longed for flight
With impotent desire.

The beggar's morsel shrivelled up,
On lordly lips the golden cup
Was turned to molten fire.

Man, beast, and building, as it past,
Curled in the flame, and withered fast,
Like cinders from a furnace cast,
Consumed in the consuming blast
Of God's avenging ire.

Lo ! blistering in his harness here,
The man of war, aghast with fear,
Clutched in a shaking hand the spear,
Or half unsheathed the sword ;
And cursed the arm that thus could fail,
And cursed the torture of his mail,
The glowing steel of no avail

Resistance to afford !

And there the harlot cowered to hide
The dainty face, that in her pride
To God and man had leered and lied,
So false and yet so fair !

The dainty face with shameless brow,
In dust and ashes sprinkled now.
That muttered many a senseless vow,
And many a soulless prayer.

Yet when the fire-blast smote her sore,

The covering from her neck she tore,
And in it wrapped the babe she bore
To shelter it from harm.

She lived, degraded and defiled,
She died, with pain and terror wild,
A sinner with a sinless child
Encircled in her arm ;
And when their souls to judgment flew,
Mayhap the purer of the two
Its scared and shrinking comrade drew,
The Pardoner to meet.

Mayhap, in that atoning day,
The Mother's love had wiped away
The woman's guilt, whose spirit lay
Forgiven at His feet !

Again looked forth the patriarch, and again ;
Still was the smoke ascending from the plain,
Though quenched the fire, and hushed the roaring
blast,

For now God's purpose was fulfilled at last.
While, like a pall by mourners' hands outspread,
Floated that sable curtain o'er the Dead.
With all his heart the son of Terah grieved,
Yet steadfastly, with all his soul, believed
The God he worshipped righteous was, and just,
And though his Lord should slay, the man could
trust.

When therefore the appointed time was spent,
He trooped his flocks and herds, and struck his tent
To journey southward, by Divine command,
And find in other climes a fairer land,

His footsteps turning from the sacred tree,
That stood in all its goodly growth, to be
A token of the Almighty's mercy still,
The witness of his truth and record of His will.

BOOK IV

THE BEAM

PART I

SCHAMIR

A MURMUR on the mountain side,
A moaning in the breeze,
A voice where passing shadows glide
Amongst the forest-trees.
A stir of leaves along the brake,
A rustle in the glade,
A ripple moving o'er the lake,
A whisper through the shade.
By wood and wold, by sea and sky,
The rush of wings, where spirits fly,
Of man's untutored ear and eye
Unheeded and unknown :
For these, though lost to mortal ken
Can yet control the fate of men,
And trouble all their future, when
It seemeth most their own.

In every human life below,
These are the powers that surely know
The measure of its weal and woe,
 The sentence of its doom ;
And whether leading it astray,
Or guiding it along the way,
That, step by step, and day by day,
 Attend it to its tomb ;
And these the powers at whose desire
 The elements are still,
For earth and water, air and fire,
 Are subject to their will,
By His decree, who gave them right,
In tasks proportioned to their might.
As lower than the sons of light,
 Such purpose to fulfil.
Perverse they are, and boast to trace
Descent from the rebellious race,
 As stubborn in their sphere,
Wild, wayward, rather fierce than bold,
Skilled to elude the captor's hold,
And in their cunning, best controlled
 By mastery of fear.
They tumble in the ferns at night,
 They dance behind the tree,
They gambol in the fading light,
They ride the moon-beam, silver-bright,
 Aslant upon the sea.
Their revels in the moss they keep
 Around the crystal spring ;
Beneath her leaves they peer and peep,

And when the lily nods to sleep,
About her bending neck they leap,
 And clasp her while they swing.
Wherever wealth of nature teems,
Where in her daintiest dress she seems
More beautiful than morning dreams,
By river, rock, and dell,
By flowery paths, and pleasant ways,
By tangled copse, and leafy maze,
Asleep in summer's golden haze,
 These spirits love to dwell.
But yet, apart from mortal eye,
The rule of man they still defy,
Unless he wrests it from on high,
 In store of knowledge strong.
And when perforce they bow before
Resistless might of human lore,
It seems to scourge and vex them sore,
 As galled with grievous wrong.
Like prisoned birds their wings that beat
Against the prison-bars,
Now here, now there, they turn and meet,
In countless rings their flights repeat.
And deem their freedom incomplete
 Amidst the very stars,
Because the summons has gone forth,
And east and west, and south and north,
 That summons when they hear,
Though stands the mighty word alone,
A word engraven on a stone,
To mortal lips as yet unknown,

Unheard by mortal ear ;
When through the depths of space it rings,
With cowering and submissive wings
The spirits, far and near,
From all the realms wherein they dwell,
The border lands of heaven and hell,
Before his face, who spoke the spell,
Must hasten to appear !
Nor one so wayward nor so bold,
As that command to disobey,
Which bade him to the throne of gold,
Where sat his lord in royal array—
A king who reigned o'er many a land,
Whom other kings must bow before,
Whose gold was countless as the sand,
Whose rule was boundless as the shore—
A king on whose behalf were met
The choicest gifts from Heaven that fall,
Wealth, glory, power, success, and yet
Whose wisdom far exceeded all
In knowledge, who had found a key
To every hoard of human lore,
To secrets of the earth and sea,
The sun, the sky, the stars, and more,
To magic power of sign and spell,
That viewless beings could compel,
From viewless haunts wherein they dwell,
To do his bidding here.
By toil or distance undeterred,
In virtue of the awful word
That all their subtler nature stirred

To agony of fear.
With eyes abashed, and drooping wing,
Each spirit as it passed the King
Did homage to the mystic ring
That held it thus in thrall.
And he who on his finger wore
The gem such potent charm that bore,
With calm regard that vexed them sore
Looked steadfastly on all,
Till, parting from the spirit band,
With but a gesture of his hand,
One shadowy form, he bade it stand.
Selected from the rest ;
And though it seemed to quail with fear,
It could not choose but venture near,
And mark with an attentive ear
The Wizard-king's behest.
'Twas but a phantom, dim and gray,
In darkling forest-nooks that lay,
And loved to watch the stream at play,
And with it dance along,
To catch the sunbeam as it strayed,
To chase the echo through the glade,
Or, lurking in the leafy shade,
To mock the wild-birds' song.
And every creature's haunt it knew,
And flowers of every scent and hue,
And weeds and herbs, and plants that grew
In every lonely place.
But still it shrunk from human sight,
At human call it took to flight,

And most in hatred and despite
It held the human face.
Thus drawing near the throne,
Unwillingly compelled,
It dared not writhe nor utter moan,
Though all its pride rebelled
Subjection by a mortal hand to own,
And hear its master speak in calm imperious tone :
“ Because o’er forest things I gave thee power,
I send thee back thy forest haunts to scour,
Forbidding thee by glade or lawn to stray,
Or cease thine urgent quest from day to day,
Until thou find and lay before my throne
A substance that can cut the hardest stone.
Nor tempered steel, nor iron shall it be,
From such polluting contact must be free
The virgin blocks that I have sought and stored
To build me up the Temple of the Lord.
Yet, tempered steel and iron to surpass
Must cut as cuts a diamond into glass,
With smooth and easy action gliding through
The rock that steel and iron may not hew.
That such a force existeth in the waste
Well do I know, and therefore bid thee haste
To seek it far and wide through thy domain,
Nor hope forgiveness if thy search be vain,
Nor dare return until thy task be done.
Behold ! thy Lord hath spoken—now begone ! ”
Obedient to the stern discharge
Accorded by the imperious King,
Rejoiced to be again at large,

The Spirit flew on ready wing ;
Coerced by that resistless spell,
To search in dingle and in dell,
Through all the haunts it loved so well,
From rise to set of sun.

And many a mountain, spent and sore,
And many a valley traversed o'er,
And many a cast it made, before

The weary chase was done.
Till, ranging by the water-side,
A low and lonely nook it spied,
Wherein the moor-hen thought to hide

The young ones of her nest.
Relieved at last, it flitted round
That secret spot, and marked the ground,
As deeming it had surely found

The object of its quest.
Then, taking counsel of its craft,
It brought a slab of granite bare
And laid it on the hole, and laughed,
And waited—watching there.

When back the moor-hen came at length
To find her portals barred,
She smote with all her tiny strength

That surface smooth and hard ;
Then to the wilderness once more
She fled, for help to seek,
And swift returning, lo ! she bore
A something in her beak,
A little worm her need to aid,
A creature on the granite laid,

That soon an easy way had made,
And bored it through and through,
But, ere the task she set about,
The Spirit with a sudden shout
So scared her that she dropped it out,
And thus away she flew !
Pleased was that cruel, cunning elf,
And laughed again within itself,
As laughs the pyat o'er its pelf,
So rich a prize to own.
And sped rejoicing on the way,
Its dreaded master to obey,
Exulting such a gift to lay
Before the golden throne.

Behold ! at last the monarch's purpose gained.
The instrument his wisdom sought obtained.
Soon in its pride uprose the sacred shrine
By human glory reared to power divine.
Block laid on block, the weighty work was piled,
By kiss of earthly metal undefiled,
For edge of earthly metal might not hew
The masses whence that stately Temple grew.
Thus, towering daily in the people's eyes,
Men looked and marvelled at its goodly size,
And deemed it strange such mason work should stand.
So deftly fitted by the mason's hand,
Each corner so exactly squared by rule,
Yet still unheard the ring of mason's tool ;
The chisel and the graving-point unknown,
And all untouched by steel the virgin stone.
None knew the magic force their King had brought

To bear on labour by the power of Thought;
Nor deemed that through the granite day and night
A little worm was boring out of sight,
The task-work to fulfil of him who bade
That little worm, called Schamir, to his aid.
To whom of all the human race alone
The creature's mystic properties were known,
Who in the volumes of a wizard's lore
Had learned its uses, and the name it bore;
Whose wisdom from the desert could compel
A thousand such, by stress of sign and spell;
Who, planning work too hard for human hand,
Held each resource of nature at command,
And found a band of slaves the toil to ply,
In all the powers of earth and sea and sky.
From dawn of morning thus, to evening's close,
The people marvelled as the Temple rose,
And held their breath, and stopped upon the way
To mark its noiseless growth from day to day,
And wagged their beards, and racked their brains in
vain
And asked their solemn elders to explain.
Answered the elders, solemn and sedate,
"Behold! The King is wise, and God is great!"
But where, though sought beyond the farthest bound
That girds the King's dominion, can be found
A beam so huge, and yet so tough of grain,
As shall the Temple's weighty roof sustain?
Behold! where still an ancient tree remains,
The goodliest growth of all the Southern plains,
A faithful record of the past, though dumb,

And truthful prophet of the time to come.
Nor in its bulk diminished, nor decayed,
Since o'er the patriarch's tent it threw a shade.
When earthly paths the heavenly footstep trod,
And holy father Abraham spake with God.
That ancient tree must fall by royal award,
An offering to the glory of the Lord,
While o'er its trunk the woodman's axe must gleam,
And carve from out its bulky heart a beam
To prop the noblest building man could raise,
The house of prayer, and sacrifice, and praise.
Two goodly columns, towering in their pride,
Uprose to flank the porch on either side—
Fit portals for the gate of God's abode,
And holy names on each the King bestowed
In words of mystery and fear, that meant
The "Guidance" and the "Strength" on which he
 leant

In memory of that early penance placed,
When weary Israel wandered through the waste,
And looked for God's own sign to lead them right—
Pillar of cloud by day, of fire by night.
Connecting each with each, the beam was laid,
And those who came to worship, or to trade,
O'erhanging thus, looked down on many a race,
From many a land, that thronged the sacred place.
For all the earth had learned the monarch's name,
And all the earth was greedy of his fame.
Kings, princes, sages, gathered far and near,
His wealth to covet, and his words to hear.
To mark his wisdom, marvelled e'en the wise,

And fools beheld his riches with surprise.
But wise and fools alike were fain to own,
That when they bowed before the golden throne
A-blaze with flash of gems on every side,
And thus beheld the lustre of its pride,
For once the voice of Rumour had not lied,
And he who sat thereon in matchless state,
Was justly called the Rich, the Wise, the Great!

THE BEAM

PART II

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

FAR in a southern land,
 Beneath unclouded skies,
Where shoots the palm from tawny sand,
To shade the camels as they stand
 Athirst, with sullen eyes,
Descending from his drooping beast,
Behold ! a merchant of the East,
 Who many a clime had seen,
Whose wares in many a mart were sought,
Who many a bale had sold and bought,
And many a costly present brought
 In tribute to the Queen.
For all who travelled far and near,
Before her throne she bade appear,
Their journeyings and escapes to hear.
 And wondrous tales they told :
Of jewelled plains where posies grew,
In gems of every shade and hue ;

Where diamonds lay, like drops of dew,
And rivers ran with gold ;
Of monstrous birds with scarlet crest
And silver wings, and ivory breast,
That brooded in a monstrous nest,
O'er pearls of monstrous size ;
Of gardens girt with magic wall.
Lest priceless fruits should outward fall,
And dragons watching over all,
With fierce and flaming eyes ;
Of mountain path and forest glade,
Where every winding turn betrayed,
At every step the traveller made,
Through gleam and gloom of light and shade,
Some new and strange surprise.
But none who thus discharged their freight
Of marvels at the palace gate,
Such tales of wonder could narrate,
As he who had beheld of late
The greatest King on earth.
Had marked o'er all the Eastern land,
His sceptre swayed by God's command,
His righteous rule, his reaching hand,
His riches countless as the sand,
His wisdom and his worth.
And thus returning homeward, fain
The Southern Queen to entertain
With glories of that monarch's reign,
He bowed him reverend down.
And kneeling, from his lowly place,
To pray her of her queenly grace

For leave to speak a little space,
Looked upward in the loveliest face
That ever wore a crown.

Swarthy she was, but comely in the glows
That flushed her crimson, like a damask rose,
With coil of jetty locks a gleam that shed,
Like shining serpents twisted round her head,
And arching brows, and tawny cheek, but clear,
Straight as a palm, and graceful as a deer.
While in her eyes there shone the tender light
We see reflected in a summer's night,
The token of a richer, warmer ray,
A lustre that shall come with coming day—
Eyes that had never languished, longed, nor wept,
For, all untouched, one half her being slept—
Soft, pleading, shy, unwilling to declare
The hidden spark that surely smouldered there ;
Yet waited only till the moment came,
When answering eyes should rouse the answering
flame,
And soul and sense and instinct should conspire
To kindle all her nature into fire.
With pliant limbs, and shape beyond compare,
She moved like flowing water, smooth and fair,
In every step and gesture showed the trace
Of desert freedom, curbed to courtly grace.
But that her lot forbade in tents to dwell,
Had laughed the loveliest damsel at the well,
For beauty crowned her matchless brows, before
The jewelled crown of royalty she wore.
And in her every turn of mood and mien

She bloomed a Woman, while she walked a Queen.
Thus in a woman's keen desire to learn
All that her home, herself, can least concern,
Or by a woman's instinct urged to run
Direct on danger it were wise to shun,
That travelled merchant now she drew aside,
And with unceasing questions shrewdly plied,
While he, encouraged by the Royal command,
Detailed the wonders of the Eastern land;
Its monarch's glories prompted to relate,
Dwelt on his power, his riches, and his state.
But most of all the Southern Queen inclined
To know the workings of that master-mind.
Entranced, as though, even here, she heard and hung
On every accent of the golden tongue;
And in the casket of her memory stored
The precepts from that fount of wisdom poured;
Nor drooped her eye, nor did her patience fail,
While thus the Eastern merchant told his tale:

“ My Queen, there lies a pleasant land
For those who lead their camels forth
To journey o'er the waste of sand
That bounds us on the east and north.
A land where in a fruitful soil
The olive and the fig-tree grow—
A land of corn, and wine, and oil,
A land where milk and honey flow;
Where every man enjoys his own,
Nor holds his right by bow and spear—
As safe, unguarded, and alone,
As one begirt with warriors here.

For there the strong and mastering hand
Is guided by the wise decree,
And while his law protects the land,
The King declares his people free.
And not with freedom only blessed,
For stated feasts their labours cheer,
And though the toil be easy, lest
The husbandman should seem oppressed,
One day in every seven they rest,
And all the seventh year.
Yet none so poor and naked go,
But meat and clothes they can bestow
According to their state ;
And, while the righteous work to speed,
They help a brother at his need,
The hungry mouths they gladly feed
Of strangers at the gate.
A steadfast purpose, not in vain,
They ever seem to entertain
In wealth and ease to live ;
With busy craft of hand and brain
They toil their object to attain,
And if they dearly love to gain
They better love to give.
Thus while their bounty more and more
Increases with increasing store,
Though keen they are and wise,
So high their trading profits mount,
Silver they deem of no account,
And gold they scarcely prize.
For ships by hundreds, and by scores,

To furl their sails on foreign shores
From every port the nation pours,
With daring seamen manned ;
And thus all curious things and fair,
Myrrh, spices, gems, and costly ware,
Apes, ivory, peacocks, strange and rare,
Are brought from every land.
And where to grace the dazzling throne,
That flames with every precious stone,
The glorious monarch sits alone
In kingly state, behold !
To keep the steps a guardian band,
By six and six on either hand,
In living likeness deftly planned,
And large as life, twelve lions stand,
Of pure and solid gold !
But all these pomps of outward pride,
And gauds of empty show,
Are but as autumn leaves that hide
The goodly fruit below ;
For, used by great ones of the earth,
Such matters seem of little worth,
Scarce noticed or required.
And that wise King himself hath told,
Though neither to be bought nor sold,
How wisdom, than the finest gold
Is more to be desired.
But never mortal man has shown
Such wisdom as the Eastern King,
For day by day, before his throne
Their several suits the people bring,

And while each doubtful case is tried,
Nor pauses he, nor wavers long ;
But sifts the truth on either side,
Dividing right from wrong.
Thus did it chance, these ears of mine
The immortal sentence heard,
Whereof the spirit seemed divine
That prompted every word.
For surely in a plea so fine,
Conflicting statements to combine,
And equal justice to assign,
Mere human wit had erred.

In truth such tangled question to decide,
At man's tribunal never yet was tried ;
Nor scroll of man's tribunal can record
The doubt unravelled by such fair award.
Behold ! when to his judgment-seat
The King went up at morning light,
There came two harlots to his feet,
Beseeching him to do them right.
One tore her hair, and rent her veil,
And called on heaven and earth to hear ;
And one stood silent, sad and pale,
And shook in sorrow more than fear.
'Justice ! great King !' the first exclaimed,
'For thou and all thy race are shamed
If justice be not done !
Thy servant and that woman there
Dwell in one house, one chamber share,
And each fulfilled her time, and bare
A little living son ;

But lately, turning in her rest,
Her new-born child to death she pressed,
So took the babe from off my breast

And laid it to her own.

But when at dawn I rose to chide ;
“ Nay, thine the infant was that died,
And mine the living child ! ” she cried,
Now, therefore, let my lord decide

Between us from the throne ! ’

The other raised her drooping head,
And never word but these she said :
‘ Nay, mine the living, thine the dead ’ ;

Then seemed her speech to fail.

But still the first, with urgent cry,
Made loud appeal to earth and sky,
To man below and God on high,

That justice might prevail.

And swore by all she most revered,
The holy Temple, yonder reared,
The High Priest’s vesture and his beard,
The hope she held, the doom she feared.

Hers was the truthful tale.

Pondered the King but little space,
Then bade the nearest warrior place

The child before him there.

‘ Divide me now the babe, ’ he said,
‘ In equal parts from heel to head ;
Each claims the living—of the dead

Let each be given her share ! ’

‘ The King is just as God above ! ’

She vowed, who first had made her plea ;

The other, stirred with mother's love,
 Could only sob, 'Nay, let it be!
The suit is hers. No more I strive,
But save my little child alive!'
Then rose the King, and every word
Of his decree, on us who heard,
 Came like a voice divine.
Said he to her who spoke the last,
'Take thou the babe, and keep it fast;
 Surely the babe is thine!'
And through the place, within, without,
From all the crowd went up a shout
 That seemed to swell and ring.
In lordly streets, and lowly ways,
A note of jubilee and praise,
The note a joyful nation raise
 In honour of their King.
For with the sentence thus made known,
His people, gathering round the throne.
The royal award were fain to own,
By wisdom prompted that alone
 The grace of God could bring!"

As though his listener's very soul was stirred,
She seemed to hang entranced on every word,
With parted lips, and dewy, dreamy eyes,
That veiled a deeper feeling than surprise.
A sense of woman's thralldom drawing near,
A thrill too keen for joy, too sweet for fear,
Dashed by a maiden shame unknown till now,
That sent the life-blood up from heart to brow,

That softened all the outline of her face,
And crowned her beauty with its richest grace ;
Till day by day that beauty lost its glow,
The light, free step, unequal fell, and slow,
The dusky cheek grew wan, and almost pale,
The weary, wistful glances told their tale,
And every change that marked her altered mien
Betrayed a wound, unstanch'd, because unseen.
Wild were her dreams, and in her troubled rest
So heaved, so panted her unquiet breast,
The busy palace-maidens, prone to pry,
Declared each breath she drew a love-sick sigh,
And vowed that as the fever-fit increased,
Their longing Queen looked always to the East.

But now, from lip to lip the rumour flew
That tales conceived in jest were coming true ;
And neighbour meeting neighbour in the gate,
Asked why the Queen thus journeyed forth in state ?
Why steeds and camels in a long array
Were filing from the walls throughout the day ?
Why every steed was trapped with gold, and more,
Why bags of treasure every camel bore ?
And whispered, as he drew his friend aside,
That all this pomp and splendour must betide
The Queen's departure for the East—the while
Gleamed in his lean, dark face a cunning smile
While yet the talk was rife in every mouth,
Left her domains that mistress of the South ?
And through the trackless desert, day by day,
Now hopeful, now depressed, she made her way,
Bound for the Holy City, there to fling

Herself, her troubles, all she had to bring,
Before the footstool of its famous King.
Judge for herself the glory and the state
Of him whom wondering travellers called the Great,
In rapture marking, rather than surprise,
How fair his person, and his words how wise ;
And so, enchained by sense of ear and eye,
Sink to a vassal, from a royal ally,
Desirous only at his feet to fall,
And offer camels, maidens, crown, and all.
Thus did she pass where gathered nations trod
The threshold of that Temple reared to God ;
And standing thus beneath the ancient beam,
To learn its history, scared as in a dream,
So strange the tales she heard, the sights she saw,
Fainted her longing soul with very awe ;
And to the kingly presence drawing near,
Failed all her woman's heart in reverend love and fear.

THE BEAM

PART III

THE RAGE OF THE HEATHEN

STILL, year by year, and day by day,
While men and nations passed away,
 The holy Temple stood,
And still, to fence its inner shrine,
Fulfilling thus the task divine,
Across its porch, in level line,
 Was laid the sacred wood.
But, day by day, and year by year,
Untouched by love, untaught by fear,
The people seemed to persevere,
 In deeds of wrath and wrong.
God's justice seemed to incite and dare,
As striving hourly to outwear
His mercy, willing to forbear,
 His patience suffering long.
For, race by race, transgressing kings
Went lusting after evil things,
Athirst for those forbidden springs
 Idolatry that poured.

The guilt of each succeeding reign,
Nor priest, nor elder, could restrain,
And prophets thundered, all in vain,
 Threats, flouted or ignored.
While round the calf of molten gold,
An idol shameful to behold,
With rites too hideous to be told,
Men danced and worshipped as of old,
And all forgot the Lord.
Thus Egypt, and his countless race,
Came up to spoil the holy place,
And with accursed hand
Made havoc in the sacred store,
The gold from scroll and tablet tore,
And took the golden shields, and bore
 The plunder to his land.
Nor shamed it Judah's craven king,
The dues he owed his God to bring,
When to the dark Assyrian wing
 He crept in abject fear.
Vain was the sacrilege, and vain
The impious bribe such help to gain!
The dark Assyrian in disdain
Took all, but bade his host refrain
 From aid with bow and spear.
And thus of gem and golden gleam,
Bare as the rock that stems a stream,
In rugged strength, that ancient beam
 Remained for many a year.
Till came the Heathen in his might
Of countless columns, day and night,

And pushed his spears from height to height,
And wheeled his horsemen left and right,
In thousands from the rear.

Sore on the vexed and weary land
He laid his heavy mastering hand ;
So close he knit the iron band,
None could escape it nor withstand ;
And thus the end drew near.

For now, with guilty daring, high and low
Filled for themselves the cup of wrath and woe
Forgot their parted brethren, and ignored
Their rival's judgment, chastened of the Lord—
Samaria, but a little bolder grown
In sins but little grosser than their own,
That like a harlot had defiled her name,
Abjured her faith, and crowned herself with shame ;
To hanker after gods of stone and wood,
And worship each by each in varying mood,
To raise in many a grove and open space
The standard and the symbol of disgrace ;
On many an altar plighting thus her troth
To Nebo, Moloch, Baal, and Ashtaroth ;
Bowed impious knees before the planets seven,
Kissed impious hands to adore the queen of Heaven,
And passed her little children through the flame,
In impious praise of Moloch's hateful name.
But who, of all she worshipped, foul or fair,
Princes, and powers of darkness and the air,
Came down to offer succour in her strait
When thundered the Assyrian at the gate ?
Prone at her feet fell Dagon on his face,

Unmoved the lordly Baal kept his place,
Sweet Ashtaroth with bright and cruel smile
Looked coldly, calmly, out of Heaven the while,
And hideous Moloch, of the stony heart,
In rigid laughter carven, grinned apart.
Fain to her early faith had she returned,
Her very soul, in stress of anguish, burned ;
Fain had she bared once more the conquering sword,
To battle-cry of Gideon and the Lord !
Too late ! The day of grace was past and dead,
Her priests were scattered and her people fled,
Her mighty ones were fallen, her warriors slain,
Her altars soiled and trampled, while in vain
She clanked in sullen fear a captive's chain.
No hope from Heaven above nor earth below—
Woe to Samaria ! and to Israel woe !

False gods ! 'Tis ever thus when man abjures
The angel's guidance, for the demon's lures ;
When from the straight and narrow path he strays,
To hunt a pleasant sin through pleasant ways.
Scarce can he grasp the phantom ere 'tis gone !
To take another shape, and tempt him on.
Like Moloch cruel, and like Ashtaroth fair,
Melts in its turn that other shape to air.
In vain he halts, his footsteps to retrace,
Behold ! around him looms a desert place,
Seamed with a thousand paths, that in his haste
Serve but to plunge him deeper in the waste ;
While all those forms that showed by day so bright,
Grown dark and hideous in the shade of night,
Around him shriek and soar, in mocking rings,

Flout with their tongues, and buffet with their wings;
Till blinded, baffled, weary, spent, and sore,
He lies as lies the weed upon the shore,
That waves have mangled, that the storm hath
tossed—

And thus a life is gone—a soul is lost!

Warned by Samaria's downfall to refrain
From Israel's guilt—but warned, alas! in vain—
Her sister Judah followed none the less
The example of rebellion and excess;
Chose with the Heathen her unhallowed lot,
Her faith dishonoured, and her God forgot,
From no enormity of sin forbore,
A harlot, like her sister, at the core;
Yet, than her sister less depraved and vile,
That, though she cherished she deplored her guile.
And when through echoing streets her prophets went
With dust-besprinkled brows and garments rent,
To raise the burden of their threatening cry,
In jealous wrath for Him they served on high,
Deep in her heart with each familiar word
Some gentler, purer, holier memory stirred;
For still the vain false heart that memory kept,
And though she scoffed, she sighed, and while she
sinned, she wept!

In vain, transgressing all alike—

Prince, peasant, prophet, priest—

The avenger's arm was raised to strike

The greatest as the least—

Was none could keep his impious hand
From off the accursed thing.

And thus the Curse was on the land,
The people and the king—
The curse, that many a deed had earned
Of darkness and disgrace;
The curse, repentance might have turned
From such repentant race—
For humbled hearts, and garments rent,
And faces sad and pale,
And strength in prayer and fasting spent,
With mercy shall prevail.
Since He who made, is loth to kill,
And loves his rebel children still.
And listens for their cry.
Will they but pause one moment's space,
Turn but one look to meet his face,
Plead but a single word for grace,
Be sure they shall not die!
For this, glad tidings have been sent,
That man need only to repent,
And God in mercy will relent,
Nor count the cancelled sin.
For this, do pitying angels wait
Expectant at the Golden Gate,
Let him but knock, however late,
To lead the suppliant in.
Alas! that still perverse in mind
To evil courses still inclined,
His ears are deaf, his eyes are blind.
Again, and yet again,
The angel whisper falls unheard,
Unmarked the angel wings are stirred,

And pleading glance and warning word
Are sent from heaven in vain.

Till rises the avenging day,
The sword is bared to smite and slay;
Fain would he seek the homeward way,
But lo! a lion there.

Like one entangled in a net,
By helpless doubt and vain regret,
And foes and fears, he stands beset,
To perish in despair.

Such was the fate of Judah, such the fate
Of men and nations who repent too late.
Yet not unwarned do men and nations fall.
Rang in the people's ears a prophet's call;
A prophet sent by Mercy from on high,
Charged but to ask in vain, "Why *will* ye die?"
Scorned, disbelieved by rulers clothed in sin,
Though now the dark Assyrian hemmed them in,
Though, roaming aimless on uncertain feet,
Pale Famine gasped and glared in every street;
Though bank on bank against the city cast
Foretold the assault that must prevail at last;
Though broken as a reed, on which depends
The weak and trusting hand it only rends,
False Egypt marching, succour to bestow,
Fled like the wind before her ancient foe,
Nor halted till she reached her watery plain,
Nor sent a single horseman forth again;
Though treachery lurked within, and fear and doubt,
While drew the siege its iron girth without;
Though hideous tales, at every corner told,

Of lust and rapine made the blood run cold ;
Though women, all unsexed, with bosoms bare,
And hollow wolfish eyes and matted hair,
Raved through the barren market, calling down
God's vengeance on their own beleaguered town,
And plucked their infants from the breast, and swore
There, in his face, to slay the babes they bore,
While hurling curses on the monarch's head,
Who heard his people cry in vain for bread :—
Yet none believed but Peace would be restored,
Nor deemed their prophet prompted by the Lord,
Nor stirred a hand to save him from his fate,
When angry elders hauled him to the gate,
And bade their cowering King confirm the doom
That plunged him guiltless in a living tomb.
By all but God forgotten, many a day
In mire and filth and darkness there he lay ;
While, fainter grown at every trumpet call,
Weak hearts were mustering on a crumbling wall ;
While War, with brawny arm, and lusty shout,
Unfurled his blood-red banner from without ;
Though failing voices told, amidst the din,
How the pale flag of Sickness hung within,
And gaunt-eyed Hunger warned his brother Fear,
In ghostly whispers, how the end was near !
Then came a tawny eunuch to the King,
And pleaded hard for leave that he might bring
The prophet out, and spoke his master fair,
And urged him, lest the man should perish there ;
For all the town was pinched for want, he said,
And who would think to give a captive bread ?

Yielded his lord, and to the prisoner's den
He bade him lead a guard of thirty men :
And " Take me out this prophet ! " was his cry,
" Go, take me out the prophet, ere he die ! "

The Ethiop heard—to hear was to obey—
And gladly to the dungeon made his way,
And bade its fainting inmate nothing fear,
Confiding in his friendly succour near ;
And looped beneath his arms a padded cord
To draw him forth, who trusted in the Lord !
And thus restored him from the loathsome place
To stand before the monarch, face to face.

Inflamed with zeal, with holy ardour fired,
The prophet raised his voice as one inspired,
Nor deigned, at such a time, to speak a lie,
Nor quenched, in such a plight, his warning cry.
" Thus hath the God of hosts," he said, " revealed :
If to the dark Assyrian thou shalt yield,
And go before him, shorn of all thy state,
To lead him in a conqueror through the gate—
Because my word thou seekest to obey,
Thy life will I restore thee for a prey,
And spare thine house, and all that with thee take
The captive's bitter portion, for thy sake,
Nor to avenging flames thy city give ;
Thus art thou safe, and thus thy soul shall live.
But if thou wilt not leave thy fenced town,
Nor bow to Babylonian princes down,
Thyself, thine house, thy people and thy land,
Will I deliver in the Assyrian's hand,
To grind beneath his heel, to burn and slay,

And into hopeless bondage lead away.”
Loth was the trembling monarch to refuse,
But said—“ Alas ! I fear the captive Jews,
Whom in his camp the Assyrian holds in thrall,
Lest these deceive and mock me in my fall ! ”
Answered the prophet—“ Fear them not ! ” he said
“ They shall not harm one hair upon thy head ;
But thou, the Lord’s commandment to obey,
Do as His servant bids thee—go thy way ;
Or else,—behold ! He shows me His design—
Thus shall he deal in wrath with thee and thine !
The women of thine house shall eunuchs bring
To stand unveiled before the Assyrian king ;
These shall not fail to mock thy fate and say,
Behold ! thy faithless friends have fled away,
And those who thus beguiled thee to conspire,
Have turned their backs and left thee in the
mire !

Then shalt thou see thy wives and children stand
The captives of the strong Chaldæan’s hand,
Led forth to heathen exile, iron-bound,
While heathens burn thy city to the ground.
And thou the cause ! Behold the sentence read !
The burden now must rest upon thy head.”
Trembled the king, and bade the seer disclose
These words of doom to neither friends nor foes ;
And if the Princes questioned, to declare
He had but left the prison with a prayer
That he might not return to perish there :
And thus he held his peace, and went his way,
And thus drew near the great avenging day.

Watchman, what of the night ?

The night is dark, the stars are dim,
The early moon, her crescent rim
A crescent pale and bright,
Is resting on the foeman's mound
That girdles all the city round,
While trumpets, answering sound for sound,
Are pealing o'er the foeman's ground,
Where camps the foeman's might.

Watchman, keep watch and ward

With eager eye and listening ear !—
The heathens gather far and near,
And put their trust in bow and spear,
Habergeon, shield, and sword.
But, while they muster fierce and strong,
To vex her with a grievous wrong,
Let Judah raise her battle-song,
Assured the issue shall belong
In battle, to the Lord !

Again ! What of the night ?

A muffled stir the watchman hears,
And, where the moon-beams strike, appears
A dancing gleam of distant spears,
That moves from height to height.
The signal flash of coming harm,
Sound, watchman, sound the shrill alarm !
Rise ! men of Judah ! rise and arm !

Make ready for the fight !

Be strong ! be brave ! your missiles bring,—
The burning brand to smear and fling,—
The rock to heave—the stone to sling—

Stand fast—for country, home, and King

God shall defend the right !

But how may those who took no heed
Of God in thought, and word, and deed
Deserve his succour at their need,

Whom, prosperous, they ignored ?
Though Judah's banner flaunts on high,
Though rises Judah's battle-cry,
While to the wall her warriors fly,
The flag shall fall, the men shall die,

Forsaken of the Lord !

Lo ! girded in unseemly haste,
With garments rent and brow defaced,
A prophet, naked to the waist,

Is striding up and down,
To raise the sad foreboding wail
That warns the mightiest men in mail,
How bow and spear shall not avail,
How hearts shall sink and courage fail,
When curses fall from heaven like hail

On this devoted town !

Then flits a voice from ear to ear
That whispers of destruction near,
And mastery of a nameless fear

Unnerves the strong man's hand ;
While shrieks of women fill the air,
Some beat their breasts and pluck their hair,
And some, in frenzy of despair,
Can only gasp a frantic prayer

To perish where they stand,
And still the crescent moon on high

Moves through a calm untroubled sky !
And still on earth below,
Like waves that with a sullen roar
Break ceaseless on a troubled shore,
Higher and higher, more and more,
Swells the advancing tide of war,
The onset of the foe.
For, one by one, to storm and hold
The outworks, till it gained them all,
The assailing force had onward rolled
Its columns to the city wall.
Like locusts on a field of green,
Like spread of a devouring flame.
Without a pause or space between,
Those swarms of heathen horsemen came ,
And comrade with his comrade vied,
For each was fain the assault to guide,
To rive and rend and slay ;
And all were thirsting spoil to win,
And all were panting to begin—
Like forest wolves that gather in
To tear a forest prey.
But now there rose a warning cry
From post to post, that rang on high,
And seemed to mount and swell,
Till, reaching up to heaven, it made
Its wild appeal for heavenly aid,—
Though answered by a yell
That mocked the anguish of its prayer,
That mocked the voice of its despair,—
For shapes in armour flashing, where

The fire-brand reddened all the air,
Came leaping in athwart the glare
Like very fiends from hell!
As sweeps a torrent o'er its fall,
They swept across the battered wall,
And through the breaches poured
In countless thousands, band by band,
The warriors of a warlike land,
And all who fell into their hand
They put them to the sword.
Behold, throughout that blood-stained night
Of slaughter rather than of fight,
The heathen revelled in his might,
While turned and broke in shameful flight
The people of the Lord.
Laughed grim Sharezer in his beard ;
And Nergal smiled, and Nebo jeered ;
While pointed Rabsaris, where appeared
To flush the morning sky.
A dawn of paler, weaker red,
Than those dark streams his horsemen shed,
Whose rage the Assyrian urged and led,
That Judah, where she fell and bled,
Beneath his heel might lie,
And fiercer than the Eastern flame
That scorched the deserts whence he came.
To wage and win his hideous game,
The blaze he kindled here.
Already was the town aglow,
The fires were raging high and low,
While ravaged that remorseless foe

With levelled shaft and bended bow,—
 With faggot, sword, and spear.
The mother shrieked, with bosom gashed,
The babe against the stones was dashed,
With brains and blood bestrewn and splashed,
And Force was into Fury lashed
 By helplessness of Fear.
Alas! ere noon in heaven was high,
 Seemed little left to burn or slay;
Thick rolled the smoke towards the sky,
 Thick on the earth the corpses lay;
While, headlong through the farthest gate,
 Scared by the foeman's tramp and shout,
Stripped of a monarch's arms and state,
 The King of Judah galloped out.
In vain! those horses of the East,
 Not Egypt's famous race surpassed,
And soon, as the pursuit increased,
 They took the king, and bound him fast,
Before the Lord of all the Earth
 He stood in fetters, face to face
To plead the right of princely birth,
 Yet failed to win a prince's grace.
The Lord of all the Earth looked down
 In scorn and anger on his prize;
With fierce reproach and ruthless frown,
 He bade pluck out the captive's eyes.
Thus did those prophecies agree,
 That each a different tale foretold,
How Babylon he should never see,
 Yet surely should its king behold.

And thus the righteous judgment came
On him who feared to draw the sword,
To call on the Almighty name,
And trust in battle to the Lord.
Thus lost he, blinded and forlorn,
His sight, his kingdom at a blow ;
Thus from his side his wives were torn,
Unveiled before a foreign foe ;
And thus to heathen hands a prey,
By heathen feet defiled and trod,
His fair and holy city lay
A smouldering heap of ashes grey,
While on that great avenging day,
In robes of flame had passed away
The Temple of his God !
But, ere the fire had done its worst,
Those very heathen hands accursed
Had spoiled the sacred shrine :
The holy veil they plucked and tore,
The holy vessels outward bore,
And trampled all the holy floor
To smite the holy servants sore,
And spill their blood like wine.
It seemed that for a house of prayer
They entertained nor fear nor care,
Rejoicing every crime to dare,
From no pollution to forbear,
Nor aught to reverence, aught to spare,
Of human or divine.
Thus, leaping to the Temple's height,
The flames in their resistless might,

Engulfed it at a bound ;
When, blazing like a kindled torch,
The goodly beam that spanned the porch,
Came crashing to the ground ;
Till, downward by the assailants rolled,
Who laughed, yet cursed it to behold
The showers it shed of molten gold.

A resting-place it found
Low in the pool, where day by day
Men washed the sheep they brought to slay,
Imbedded in the yielding clay,
Like some exhausted thing that lay

Part stranded, partly drowned.
Abandoned now by friends and foes,
The conquerors these, the captives those,
While morning after morning rose,
About the city seemed to close,

Unbroken by a sound,
Such horror as our fancies spread
About the stillness of the Dead,
The horror of a nameless dread,
Where Silence reigns around !

BOOK V

THE POOL

YEAR after year, as day succeeded day,
Age after age, as year succeeded year,
Still in this turbid pool neglected lay
The beam by heathen malice grounded here.
Another race from bondage had returned ;
A warlike king sat firm upon the throne ;
Smiled from the ashes of a city burned
A fairer pile of marble and of stone.
A second Temple on the holy site
Reared to the Syrian skies its roof of gold ;
Bright shone the gilded capitals, and bright
Flashed the tall gilded columns as of old.
Through many a year did Judah gnaw the chain
Of bitter thralldom in a foreign land,
And looked for a deliverer in vain,
To break the mastery of her tyrant's hand :
A coming king of more than mortal birth,
Invested with the sceptre and the sword,
A ruler over all the bounds of earth,
A conquering captain, an imperious lord :

Small heed she took of His celestial sway,
From heaven who bids the dew of Mercy fall,
Whom angels in their holy home obey,
Whose reign is Peace, goodwill, and hope for all.
Surely for this, from day-break till its close,
True to their Master, jealous for his name,
Through every street the prophet's warning rose,
Through every street its burden was the same :
“ Repent, my people, ere the time be past !
Repent, and turn ye from the evil thing !
The Lord of Hosts, He shall prevail at last !
The God of Jacob, He shall be your king !
Will ye not know Him when He cometh down ?
Will ye deny the Man of Sorrows here ?
Plait for His gracious brows the martyr's crown,
Scoff at His cruel pangs with mock and jeer ?
Ye fools, and blind ! Come back unto the Lord,
And turn ye to the light, while yet 'tis day !
Nor spurn the Prince by heaven and earth adored,
Nor scorn the power that Heaven and earth obey !
Such was the voice inspired, and such the cry
That fell unmarked on Judah's graceless ear ;
Such was the pledge of Him who cannot lie,
Redeemed through many a long forbearing year
Of sins repeated, and of grace renewed,
Of merciful reprieve from time to time.
That cleansed the guilty hands with blood imbrued
That salved in guilty hearts the wounds of crime
And he whom King of kings the nations called,
Was led to favour thus the captive race ;
Freed from the bonds in which they lay enthralled,

Once more to flourish in their ancient place ;
Once more to build a house unto the Lord,
The rites their early faith required to hold,
Once more the Daily Sacrifice restored
In homage to Jehovah, as of old :
The creatures, lent for use of man to slay,
Prefiguring thus by man to slaughter led
The Lamb of God, who in a coming day
Should bear a world's transgressions on his head.
But ere these victims to the steel were brought,
As ordered by the priest's appointed rule,
The priestly servants in their course were taught
To drive them forth and wash them in a pool,—
Hereafter, for the virtues it revealed,
“ Bethesda ” or “ the House of Mercy ” named
The halt, the sick, the maimed, its waters healed ;
Halt, sick, and maimed its kindly powers proclaimed
Lo ! here forgotten and imbedded lay
The beam that once sustained so rich a freight,
And bore a silent witness, day by day,
To all the changing turns of Judah's fate.
For Judah, like a fair and regal dame,
Drew many a dread admirer to her court :
And some with smile and flattering whisper came,
And some declared their suit with threatening port :
From him, insatiate, with ambition fired,
The Macedonian, of prophetic birth,
Who, other worlds to subjugate desired,
And chafed, restricted by the bounds of earth,
Down to the haughty Roman, who appeared
Girt with a host that conquered where they trod,

The offerings of her worship, who revered,
Nor dared to spoil the Temple of her God.
Thus did she stand again in rich array,
A queen, enthroned by force of shield and sword
Beneath that crafty ruler's iron sway,
Who served the Cæsar while he praised the Lord !
Who fenced her in with many a warlike line,
And crowned her walls with many a stately tower,
And held his peace, and nursed his own design,
Nor grudged the tribute that confirmed his power.
A man by nature moulded to command,
In dark intrigue to bear the darker part,
A man of reckless will, and ruthless hand,
Resistless courage and remorseless heart.
For this, ere yet his aims he had attained,
Submission to imperial Rome he made ;
Thus from imperial Rome dominion gained,
And kept the throne she gave him, with the blade
For this, he spared not servant, son, nor friend
Who crossed his purpose, or his secrets knew ;
But, (used alone for furtherance of his end,)
The man whom most he trusted, him he slew.
And doomed the wife,—who lay upon his breast,
The wife he loved,—with fierce and cruel pain
To death, unpardoned, even as the rest,
Nor felt one moment's ease of mind again !
How oft the glorious beauty he recalled,
The loving, lustrous glance, the queenly brow
The woman's smile, that all the man enthralled.
The woman's tender graces, perished now
For bleeding Love avenged its injured right,

And phantoms passed before his sleepless eye,
While, in the silent watches of the night,
Rose to the echoing roof a raging cry,—
The echoing roof gave back that fatal word,
And “*Mariamne!*” rang through all the air,
Till those who woke, to tremble as they heard,
Believed a soul from hell was shrieking there.
Woe to the heart that mercy never knew!
That beat for lust of power and pride alone,
With each succeeding crime that fiercer grew,
And hardened in impunity to stone.
Woe to the hand, those infants’ blood that shed!
The guiltless blood, that ere the babes were cold
Cried out to heaven for vengeance on his head
Who feared the new-born King his seers foretold
But Woe and Vengeance seemed to tarry long,
As careless of a people’s fear and hate;
And still the monarch prospered and was strong,
And Judah’s Herod still was called the Great!
For laws of God and man while he defied,
Hers was his highest thought, his deepest scheme,
He decked her as a tyrant decks his bride.
And Judah’s Glory still was Herod’s dream.
Thus for his own and for his country’s good
The splendid monarch robed her fair and fine,
Re-built the ancient Temple where it stood,
And hung with offerings all its holy shrine.
For this it may be Heaven looked down to spare,
And granted leisure to repent in time,
Lest haply force of fasting and of prayer
Might win a pardon for that life of crime.

Yet paused he not upon the downward way,
To work of lust and murder seasoned now;
His blood ran fiercer as his locks turned grey,
And years engraved their sins upon his brow;
Till, at the last, in anguish racked and torn,
A living, loathsome mass, with death to cope,
He laid him down, and gnashed his teeth in scorn,
And died, as dies a dog—without a hope.
Not his the trust that stifles earthly fear,
Not his the faith that in affliction's hour
Beholds the Good Physician drawing near,
And leaves its wounds to Mercy's healing power:
Like theirs, the sick and maimed, with scars and sores,
With festering limbs corrupt, and bones laid bare,
Who thronged about Bethesda's pool by scores
To wait the troubling of the waters there,—
Some in the porches calmly lay at rest,
The porches five, about the place that stood,—
And some with weak, impatient gestures, pressed
And pushed their like aside in fretful mood.
For ever and anon, they passed the word
From lip to lip throughout the ghastly band,
That now to healing power the pool was stirred
By virtue of the expected angel's hand;
And those who hastened down to bathe them first,
For every ill that vexed them, solace found,
And, cured of all the woes disease had nursed,
Stepped from the troubled surface whole and sound
With life and strength renewed, to go their way.
Pain, sorrow, sickness vanished like a dream.
Nor guessed the secret of their welfare lay

Wrapped in the worth of that half-sunken beam
Which peered above the lapping, shallow wave,
To yield its balm for every human ill—
Type of the godlike power that came to save,
The godlike mercy, unexhausted still.
Warped were the wasted forms that gathered here
With shaking limbs and faces drawn and wan,
And dry, white lips agape, but not with fear,—
For fear finds little room when hope is gone,—
Pointed with palsied arm the uncertain hand,
Wagged with a palsied roll the shaking head,
The palsied feet could scarce make shift to stand,
Through palsied veins the blood ran numbed and
dead.
Each form of suffering helplessness could wear
Expressed itself in wail and gasp and moan,
Yet grudged for others' pangs one sigh to spare,
Nor seemed to credit aught except its own !
But those about the pond who thronged and pressed,
Their helpless brethren trampled where they lay,
Soon as the water heaved its troubled breast
The stronger pushed the weaker wretch away :
Was none would move a finger for the aid
Of crippled fellow-sufferer far or near,
And care of self at every turn betrayed
That self, however loathsome, still was dear !
While peevish spite seemed powerless to refrain
From angry curse and cuff when jibed or crossed
Thus was the task affliction set, in vain,
And thus the teaching of their trials lost.
Yet still like precious dew from heaven that fall

On good and bad, impartial, soft and mild,
Those gracious waters healed the plagues of all,
And cleansed the leper, even as the child ;
For Mercy takes no thought of rank or state,
The poorest and the weakest, and the worst
Of weary souls are welcome at her gate ;
And those who stoop the lowliest, enter first.
Surely it seems not much that she requires—
A homeless hopeless heart, a humble cry,
A spirit mourning for its dead desires,
Yet in its desolation, loth to die.
Not much of frail mortality to ask,
A few weak steps along the path of right :
Nor seems the Lord severe, nor hard the task,
His yoke is easy, and his burden light.
Yet man will choose the yoke that galls him sore,
The burden he can find no strength to bear ;
These drag him down to rise again no more,
Though both would vanish with a single prayer.
And rather will he labour, heart and hand,
To serve a mocking master day by day,
Who laughs to see him spinning ropes of sand,
The devil's agent, for the devil's pay,
Than earn, in easy toil, the rich reward
Awaiting all who will but persevere,
Who weave the strands of Faith into a cord
That holds them fast to heaven when sinking here.
Not till each earthly hope hath passed away,
Till things of earth are fading from our sight,
We learn that those who thus misuse the day,
Have lost their shelter from the fall of night.

Then, daunted by the Horror drawing near,
Its vague and boundless gloom we quail to mark,
Numbed by the palsy of a nameless fear,
Like children waking helpless in the dark.
Yet is there help if we will only seek
The ear that listens for our faintest cry,
The hand that loves to raise the fall'n and weak,
The voice that bids us turn before we die,
Needs but to lie the scorn of trampling feet,
An outcast from the flock, forlorn, alone.
Though scarce the poor lost lamb has strength to bleat,
The Shepherd stoops to claim it for his own,
And lifts it with a kind and gentle hand,
And heals it with a touch from shame and sin,
And bears it homeward to the happy land,
Where pain and sorrow shall not enter in.
Thus, when the world has crushed him to the dust,
When all he asks is death to make an end,
Pierced by the reed whereon he leaned in trust,
Behold the sinner's refuge and his Friend !
Now when the angel to Bethesda came
And moved the water, round its margin drew
Their trailing limbs the impotent and lame,
With rags and filth defiled, a hideous crew,
And in the loathsome pressure, one of these,
Without a friendly hand his steps to stay,
By torture urged, while hindered by disease,
Sank to the earth, exhausted where he lay—
While those who should have held a brother dear,
Scourged by a like affliction of their own,
Turned from his sufferings with a brutal jeer,

And mocked the very pangs themselves had known
And those whose manhood might have served his need

A neighbour or a kinsman, had in care
Plight so forlorn, why should they help or heed ?

They knew him not—so let him perish there.
Consumed and sapped by many a year of pain,
Thus from the pool he turned a hopeless eye,
And looked to heaven and earth for aid in vain,
And wept, because it seemed so hard to die
A lonely sufferer, in a suffering band,
A friendless waif, where friends were thronging
round,

A helpless wretch, though help was close at hand,
By God and man forsaken, on the ground.

But ere his reeling senses failed him quite,

Behold ! he knew a gracious Presence near :
A gracious vision passed before his sight,
A gracious form bent down to soothe and cheer.

Thrilled to his heart the accents all divine,

“ Would’st thou not fain be healed and whole, my
son ? ”

“ Master,” he said, “ for trouble such as mine,

Friend, hope or succour, surely can be none !
Lo ! when the pool is stirred, and I would lave
My tortured limbs, will no man draw me nigh ?
Kind hands are stretched by scores the rest to save,
But I am left, uncared for, here to die ! ”

Answered in gracious words the gracious voice,

Words that a balm and cordial seemed to shed,
That bade his strength return, his heart rejoice :

“ Rise up, and take thy bed and walk,” it said.

Then rose he, in an instant, whole and sound,
And, lifting up the bed whereon he lay,
Regardless of the Jews who murmured round
That thus he broke the Sabbath, went his way.
For life came glowing back while yet he heard
The godlike tones that life and hope conveyed.
Healed by the virtue of a single word—
“Take up thy bed and walk!”—the man obeyed
Enough for him the glad result to feel;
The Master’s will he little cared to learn,
Nor asked why here he came on earth to heal,
Nor sought to give him worship in return.
Though in the Temple, when he saw again
That face divine, he could not but recall
His holy name, who eased the throb of pain,
And bade him “Sin no more, lest worse befall!”
Who flings a starving dog one scrap of meat,
Or binds a rag about its wounded limb,
Beholds the creature crawling to his feet
And lifting grateful eyes alone to him.
For lower instincts loftier aims attain,
The poorer nature yields the richer fruit,
And Reason, in her proudest mood, may gain
A true and touching lesson from the brute.
We find no love for One who loves us best;
We learn no trust, where most we should depend;
But lock our fealty in rebellious breast,
And scorn to own a master in a friend.
The dog will fawn on him who helped its need,
And lick the kindly hand that gave the bone,
Bound to its lord by one such gracious deed.

Ingratitude belongs to man alone ;—
Ingratitude ! that springs a plant accursed,
From favoured fields where showers of mercy fall,
To bear a poisoned fruit—if not the worst,
The vilest, basest sin among them all !
Of man's transgression, first and instant cause,
That doomed his race eternally to die
Till Justice set aside her primal laws,
And Mercy gave redemption from on high.
Redemption, man's defiance can refuse
In wilful folly when he turns away,
The darker paths of sin and shame to choose
That lead him downward from the light of day,
To sink at length in everlasting deeps,
Through everlasting regions of despair,
Where memory ceases not, nor conscience sleeps,—
The fire unquenched, the worm undying there ;
An upward path he takes no thought to find,
The stream he scorns that runs to cleanse his guile,
And man is lost because his eyes are blind,
And man is lost because his heart is vile.
Oh ! for the loving instinct, that would seek
Its shelter in the home that gave it birth ;
Oh ! for the lowly wisdom of the meek,
Blessed by their Master as the heirs of earth.
Oh ! for the faith that Master to receive,
On Him to lay our load and cast our care ;
The faith that bids us act as we believe,
Removing mountains by the force of prayer.
Alas ! that like the Jews, on outward form
We hope to rear the stronghold of our trust,

And when the winds arise, and beats the storm,
Behold ! our fabric crumbles into dust.
Alas ! that when we strive to thread again
The sinful maze wherein we loved to stray,
A hand to guide us forth we seek in vain,
The Saviour has "conveyed himself away."
Not even thus our hearts should wholly fail—
None so forlorn but He will heed their prayer.
We need but plead in earnest to prevail,
And seek the Temple—we shall find Him there.
This is the gracious promise that He gave,
The faithful pledge of Him who cannot lie,
Whose mission here was not to slay, but save :
"Where two or three are gathered—there am I"—
Linked in the human bond of brother's love,
When two or three shall pray with one accord,
Borne straightway to the Mercy Seat above,
That prayer shall find acceptance with the Lord
And angels day by day from heaven descend
To watch the pool of succour here below.
Are none, for lack of kinsman or of friend,
Need perish by the margin where they flow ;
These ministers shall prompt the saving word,
And where the healing waters lap and toss,
Shall bid him mark how through the surface stirred,
Appears the sacred figure of the Cross.
Then sinking, yielding to the oppressor's might,
Though heaven itself seem loth its aid to give,
Needs but on this to fix his failing sight,
The man is saved—For he who looks shall live.

BOOK VI

THE CENTURION

THE level rift that dawn reveals,
Is widening, cold and clear,
And through the sedge a whisper steals,
And in the camp a trumpet peals,
To tell that day is near.
Though fenced be that encampment round,
With ditch and rampart, bank and mound,
The Legion, holding conquered ground,
Has pushed an outpost here,
Where, from the West, the Danube flows,
To find his Euxine home,
Where from the North, the tempest blows,
To bend the woods, and drive the snows,
Where swarm the fierce and rugged foes,
Who hate the name of Rome,
For every foot has cost her dear,
And every foot she holds in ward,
Won by the might of sword and spear,
Kept by the right of spear and sword :

With even foot and measured pace,
Advance her columns, sure and slow,
From clime to clime, from place to place,
Absorbing nations as they go.
Subduing, quelling all alike,
Of those who yield, or turn at bay :
Where once the cruel talons strike,
Her eagles never loose their prey.
To plant her eagles far and wide,
Expending wisdom, valour, worth,
She sees the warriors die, with pride,
Who make her mistress of the earth.
For this, the Roman trumpets sound,
Wherever living thing draws breath.
For this, the Legion takes its ground,
For this, defends it to the death,
For this, a forward outpost placed,
The Legion's movements checks and guides,
Where through the broad and stagnant waste
The broad and sluggish river glides.
And here, in garments soiled and torn,
And arms that many a dint have borne,
Roused from his lair of slush and mire,
A soldier, scarred and battle-worn,
Is musing in the chilly morn
Before a dying fire.

His watch is over ; ear and eye
May rest them for a space,
And sadly from the brightening sky
He turns a darkened face ;

And stretches numbed and stiffened hands,
Such failing warmth to meet;
As lingers in the smouldering brands
That whiten at his feet.
Of moaning wind, and bending reed,
And cheerless gleam of early day,
His senses take but little heed,
And all his thoughts are far away.
For where the flame has sunken low,
Ere yet his limbs are scarcely warmed,
The embers, in their parting glow,
The figure of a Cross have formed.
And, like a vision of the night,
That holds the haunted sleeper fast,
Arise to scare his troubled sight,
The phantoms of an awful Past.
Again, with shield and spear, he stands,
A rock amidst a raging sea
Of scowling brows and tossing hands,
That point the way to Calvary.
Again he hears the tempest swell,
Of hungry hate, in howl and groan,
The savage laugh, the hideous yell
Of murder, slaked by blood alone.
And if the tumult waxes high,
Disdains to notice, calm and proud,
But with a soldier's scornful eye
Reviews the loose disordered crowd,
And thinks how masterly and well
With spears and bow-men twenty score
The rising he could crush and quell,

Nor ask a single helmet more !
Yet wonders in his heart, that he
Who governs in the conquered town
Endures this brawling rout to see,
Nor stirs to put the riot down ;
Although, but now, at break of day,
His judgment when the accusers sought,
Himself had heard that Ruler say,
No fault he found in Him they brought,
But held Him innocent and just,
A blameless man, devoid of guile,
Yet pandered to a people's lust
By sending Him to death, the while,
Though chief of but a hundred men,
A mere Centurion, then as now,
The flush of anger, now as then,
Is rising in his swarthy brow,
For hate of that presumptuous race
Who dared assume judicial power.
Soon had they fled before the face
So pure and princely in its grace,
Could *he* have filled the Prætor's place,
If only for an hour !
Of Rabbi, Scribe, and written law,
But little did he know or care,
Believed alone in things he saw,
And trusted harness more than prayer ;
Had lively faith in proven steel,
When wielded by a practised hand,
But moral force could scarcely feel,
Nor moral doubts could understand,

Nor patience found for those, nor ruth,
Who loved on dogmas to refine,
And to the question,—“What is truth?”—
Had learned to answer from his youth,
“A thousand men in line!”
But now, while that tumultuous press
Was surging round a single form,
In candour could not but confess
That He, who faced so wild a storm
With gracious and forgiving mien,
That rather seemed to grieve than fear,
Displayed a courage too serene
And god-like, to be earth-born here.
And when they sought Bethesda’s pool,
And drew the beam from out its wave,
To shape it by the ghastly rule
That forms a gibbet for a slave,
And bade the scared Cyrenian bear
His hideous burden in the van,
To guide the grim procession there
That led to death the Son of Man—
Lo! while the slave, his shoulders brown,
That awful emblem to up-rear,
Stripped to the waist, and girt his gown,
Dark was the stern centurion’s frown,
Fain had he struck the caitiff down
With handle of his spear!
But meekly, solemnly, and slow,
The while He passed along,
There peered from every nook a foe,
And threatened every hand a blow,

On every side from high and low
 Poured insult, wrath, and wrong ;
Derisive shouts and brutal cries,
On Him, who walked in gentle guise,
With placid brow, and patient eyes,
Where Love eternal seemed to rise,
 Through that blaspheming throng.
What could he do but turn aside,
The scorn and shame he felt to hide ?
His conscience pricked, his heart rebelled,
The soldier's pride within him swelled,
And half in pity, half in ire,
He thirsted with a fierce desire
To see the Prætor lift his hand,
In sign he might advance his band,
And sweep this Jewish rabble clear
With pointed shaft, and levelled spear.
How humbly in that open space,
Then had he sought the gracious face,
And craved permission but to fall
And worship in the sight of all !
Not so—the instincts of his trade,
The very hilt that crossed his blade,
The eagle on his golden crest,
Were but as symbols to attest
That soul and body, life and limb,
Belonged to Cæsar, not to him ;
And right or wrong, at best or worst,
His duty was to Cæsar first.

Have we not each a Cæsar of our own,

Whose rule can brook no rival near the throne?
A despot claiming undivided sway,
Whom reason, heart, and conscience must obey;
Who draws his tribute to the utmost mite,
Nor bates a jot of his accustomed right?
Who day by day a heavier burden lays,
And plies us harder as our strength decays,
Till crushed and sore beneath the hopeless strain,
We sink without a wish to rise again?
In every shape the tyrant works his will,
In every shape he reigns, a tyrant still:
Now like a monarch, brave in royal attire,
His lust, ambition, power his sole desire;
Not for its uses valued, but its fame,
Truth, honour, justice, bartering for a name.
Now in the mask that beauty joys to wear,
Of blushing smiles bewildering, false and fair,
A wreath of roses wearing, to conceal
The torturing pressure of a band of steel,
A coiling serpent, cooing like a dove,
The wild idolatry that men call love.
Anon, with rage of hunger uncontrolled,
Insatiate, starving for the greed of gold,
Privation, pain, accepting, but to earn
Some yellow earth, by morsels in return.
Of all that rule us, none so base and vile
As avarice—none so absolute the while.
Or sleek and torpid, on a cushioned throne
He cares to seek indulgence, ease, alone;
Each nobler feeling stifled in its birth,
By joys of sense, that chain him to the earth;

Clogged with a sloth no effort can control,
Sunk in a hopeless slumber of the soul,
Yet fain to govern, unrestrained of will,
And jealous of supreme dominion still ;
Nor stern rebuke he has, nor angry frown,
But with a leaden hand, remorseless bears us down.
Imperious masters these ! and yet of all
The powers of evil holding him in thrall,
Ambition, pleasure, sloth, desire of pelf,
None press so hard on man as love of self ;
For though at first his higher instincts spurn
The yoke that frets and galls at every turn.
Too soon, debased in mind, in heart depraved,
His very nature so becomes enslaved,
The spirit hath not even a desire
To rise from where it wallows in the mire ;
But sunk, degraded to the last degree,
Foregoes the very longing to be free !
And this is Cæsar's service ! To enrol
The mortal body, and the immortal soul,
Without a hope beyond ; for Cæsar's pay,
The worthless pittance doled from day to day,
The leave to do his work, his badge to wear,
His eagles in the weary march to bear,
Wade ankle-deep in blood through fields of strife,
To forfeit in his cause a soldier's life,
And offer all to an ungracious lord
Who grudges even thanks for a reward.—
Such is the fate of those who choose to bring
Their sole allegiance to an earthly king,
Who lay their lives before an earthly throne,

And put their trust in earthly power alone,
By fear or interest blinded, who obey
The hand that cannot reach beyond to-day,
And render Cæsar, at the imperial nod,
A tribute that is only due to God !

* * * * *

Behold ! 'tis done !
Quenched is the light of heaven, and veiled the sun
While earthward, like a pall,
A horror of great darkness seems to fall
About a dead creation, shrouding all ;
The plain is heaving, wave on wave,
And corpses, risen from the grave,
Are gliding to and fro.
Great God ! It scares the bravest of the brave
To see them come and go,
With white sepulchral faces, calm and clear,
Untouched by weal or woe,
Unmoved by hope or fear,
And deep far-seeing eyes that know
The secrets of another world, and glow
With sad and solemn lustre, never kindled here :
For it is finished now,—
And heaven once more has triumphed over hell—
The devils quake, remembering how they fell,
And holy angels, where with God they dwell,
In adoration bow.
Though through the realms of bliss there rings
a cry
Forced from His human half that needs must die,

To trouble all the Seraphim on high,
And stamp the brand of shame and agony
On each immortal brow.

While ransomed man below
Scoffs at his Saviour on the Cross,
And, rescued from eternal loss,
Denies Him yet. Although
The sternest mood of earthly pride,
Taught by the thief, who at His side
Found grace and pardon ere he died,
Might learn to love its Friend and Guide,
Its Lord and God to know.

Thus, as a cloud before the gales
That freshen morning skies,
As darkness, peeling off like scales
To clear a blind man's eyes,
The stern Centurion, watching how,
With one expiring groan,
Death on the pure and precious brow
Is set as on a throne,
Knows that his doubts have passed away
Before a dawn of light,
Bewildered by the dazzling day
His soul receives her sight ;
Thrills a conviction at his heart,
Shoots through his brain a gleam,
And like a sleeper, with a start,
Awaking from a dream,
In fear and awe he bows his head,
As cowers a slave beneath the rod,
And cries aloud, for very dread,

In presence of the holy dead,
 " This was the Son of God ! "

* * * * *

In hoary dust the embers lie
 To smear the oozing clay,
The flame but flickers up to die,
 The vision fleets away.
Yet for an instant, charged with light,
 That streams through heart and brain,
Pervading memory, sense, and sight,
 It flashes out again,
And seems to rise, and heave, and swim,
 And sink, and disappear.
For who is this? the stranger grim,
That lays his grasp on every limb,
 To hold him helpless here ;
With failing hand, with fading eye,
Forbid to fight, forbid to fly.
Pinned like a log on earth to lie,
 Across a useless spear.
His senses droop, he pants for breath.
 —Surely the end is near,
It is not sleep, it is not fear,
 It must be Death !—
Lithe is the arm that draws the bow,
Where swoops the Scythian on his foe,
And ere the singing arrow's point
Has cloven through the harness joint,
With bending form and tightened rein,
The mounted archer scours the plain,

To join a wild careering host,
And tell with savage laugh and boast,
That yonder, in the sedges, where
Last night a watch-fire shed its glare,
This morning, ere the dawn was red,
He left a Roman soldier dead !

Soon of each swift and shaggy steed
These hardy warriors taxed the speed,
 To spoil that fallen prey,
Like ruffled falcons, wheeling round ;
But ere a rider touched the ground
 The Roman's soul had passed away,
Uprising in desire of light,
And swifter than their arrow's flight,
Had pierced inevitable night
 To find eternal day.

Down-struck, by an extinguished fire,
His armour soiled, with blood and mire,
 His eagle-crest defiled,
Ere yet they bent to strip him bare,
While round the dead they gathered there,
 It seemed to them he smiled.
And though he lay on Scythian soil
For Scythian foes to spurn and spoil,
 And gave his life to Rome.
Yet surely One to whom he raised
The dying thought that prayed and praised,
Stooped from the Heaven on which he gazed,
 And led his spirit Home.

THE ARAB'S RIDE TO CAIRO

THE ARAB'S RIDE TO CAIRO

A Legend of the Desert

DEDICATED TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS
OF GLOUCESTER



HASSAN's brow is dark and troubled,
Hassan's cheek is wan and pale,
For the father's heart is aching
Sore beneath the warrior's mail.
In his Harem they are weeping,
Hush'd and low the mourner's wail.

Fairest of the Moslem's daughters,
On her couch is Zillah lying,
Sick and wasted :—through the lattice
Sad the evening breeze is sighing—
Dews are on her forehead gathering,
Azrael beckons—she is dying.

Hush ! she speaks, that broken Lily,—
Treasure well each accent dear—
In her fevered dream she murmurs
Of a fountain fresh and clear,

And an orange-grove that mocks her,
Thirsting for its golden cheer.

Calm and sad the Leech is listening,
She is past the Leech's skill—
"Since her very soul is craving,
"If it should be Allah's will,
"Give the maid the fruit she longs for,
"And she may recover still."

Thousands ten of mounted warriors
Wait the wave of Hassan's hand—
Thousands ten of gleaming sabres
Leap to light at his command—
But a golden grove of Orange
Hath not Hassan in the land.

Nearer than the spires of Cairo,
Full two hundred miles away,
Not a leaf adorns the desert.
Fever thirst brooks no delay,
Hassan's darling child may perish
Pining through another day.

He—the man of blood—the spoiler,
Cursed by man, by woman feared—
He, before whose march of terror
Wells are choked and orchards cleared
Now for one poor simple orange
Fain would give his very beard!

Who is this, that night and morning
 'Neath the wall is seen to wait ?
Who is this, that late and early,
 Tidings seeks of Zillah's fate ?
Braving dreaded Hassan's anger—
 Watching ever at the gate ?

Breathlessly the Leech he questions,
 Owns the sage his art is vain.
Ere the last red streak of sunset
 Sinks behind the dusky plain,
Nadir's foot is in the stirrup,
 Nadir's hand is on the rein.

Ere the moon the sand hath silvered,
 Many a mile upon his way,
Hath he sped—that hurrying horseman,
 Through the night till dawn of day.
O'er the trackless desert flying,
 Sore he plies the gallant bay.

Steed whose mettle never fails him,
 Pure of blood, of quenchless fire,
Steed whose long, unfalt'ring gallop
 Not those desert sands can tire,
Worthy of his kingly breeding,
 Priceless dam, and matchless sire.

Through the lapse of countless ages,
 That enduring, generous race,
Unpolluted by the stranger,
 Boasts the Bedouin to trace,

Still within his tented dwelling
Finds the colt a comrade's place.

Now, thou "Star that glads the Desert"
(Such the Bedouin named the steed)
Thou shalt prove thy lasting vigour,
Thou shalt tax thine utmost speed.
Ere thou reach the distant city
All thy mettle shalt thou need!

In bazaar of busy Cairo,
Merchants sleek their traffic ply;
Much they marvel at the stranger,
Travel-worn, with haggard eye,
Gazing on the ripened Orange,
Proffering gold the fruit to buy.

Stays he not? that eager horseman,
Scorns he rest, and food, and prayer?
Mad the pious merchant deems him,
"Allah keep him in his care!"
See! he homeward wheels his courser,
Snorting to the desert air.

Like a phantom fleeting dimly,
O'er the trackless, boundless plain,
Man and horse are labouring onward,
Man and horse to rest are fain—
Urge him not! the steed is reeling—
Haggard rider! draw the rein!

Since he left his stall for Cairo
Twice hath set the desert sun ;
Sparing food hath been his portion,
Water hath he tasted none—
Blood and sinew are but mortal,
Now his race is almost run.

Hadst thou rested in the city,
Weary horseman, wan and pale !
He had borne thee home in triumph—
Now his limbs begin to fail :
Love and fear may goad the rider.
Little shall his haste avail,

For the gallant steed is sickening,
Still he strives to meet the rein,
Glazed his eye—his neck is stiffening
E'en his master's voice is vain,
And the " Star that glads the Desert "
Rolls upon the burning plain !

Woe to thee ! the ruthless rider !
Woe to thee ! the hapless steed !
Lonely pair, the waste is round ye,
Who shall help ye at your need ?
Warning true the Sage hath spoken,
" Fiery haste makes failing speed."

Shrieks of women fill the harem,
Hassan's tears fall thick and fast,

Weeps the warrior like a maiden
Now that hope and fear are past,
And to anguish wakes the father,
And the daughter sleeps her last.

To her virgin-grave bewailing,
Zillah's form shall virgins bear,
O'er her tomb in fond remembrance
Train the spotless rose with care ;
Night and morning flowers shall scatter
Mournful fragrance on the air.

Many a mile within the desert
Scorched and withering in the sun
Nadir and his steed are lying,
Perished ere the task be done,
Through the sultry air the vultures
Gather round them one by one.

Bones of man and horse are bleaching
Heaped together where they fell—
In his shawl untouched the orange,
Wandering Bedouins long shall tell
How the ruthless rider perished,
How he loved his Zillah well !

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